United Nations A/62/PV.15

General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

15th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 2 October 2007, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Brent Symonette, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Mr. Symonette (Bahamas): I am proud to address this body as the representative of the Government of the Bahamas. We are committed to achieving a sense of security, well-being, pride and prosperity for the people of the Bahamas. We look forward to working with fellow Member States towards securing the same opportunities and freedoms for all people.

On behalf of the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, I congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I also want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor for her leadership and dedication and for so aptly guiding the work of the sixty-first session.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his appointment as the eighth Secretary-General of the Organization. My Government is confident that, given Secretary-General Ban's experience and diplomatic skills, he will aptly guide the Organization in facing its challenges.

Let me take this opportunity to commend the General Assembly's adoption of the historic resolution 61/19, on the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and on the commemoration of the International Day held on 25 March of this year. The Bahamas, where the majority of our people are proud descendents of freed slaves, is participating at both the national and the regional levels in a number of commemorative activities. We fully support the project aimed at erecting a permanent memorial at the United Nations in commemoration of that shameful period in the history of our world.

At a time when the international community is engaged in serious reflections regarding the history and consequences of slavery and the slave trade, the Bahamas wishes to recognize Haiti as the only country to liberate itself from slavery and for the inspiration this provided to the international campaign against slavery.

Since modern forms of slavery still exist and since many people continue to be held in servitude, we must not relent in our resolve until everyone is able to enjoy and exercise the freedoms which this Organization has worked so diligently to recognize, uphold and defend.

Despite Haiti's proud history, challenges have beset our neighbour for generations. Haiti's return to democratic order last year was especially welcomed, and we celebrate the strides Haiti is making along the difficult and arduous road to peace, security and

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development. We heartily commend President Préval and his Administration for their stewardship of this demanding process. At the same time, we also commend the Organization of American States for its unstinting support for the people of Haiti.

The United Nations Mission in Haiti continues to play a vital role in this process, and the Bahamas supports the call for that mission to be maintained so as to consolidate the gains made to date and thus place our Caribbean Community (CARICOM) sister country on a firm and lasting path to sustainable development, peace, security and democracy. We urge the international community to support the people of Haiti in that quest.

As Haiti lies merely 90 miles from the southern shores of the Bahamas, its economic and political situation can and does have very tangible repercussions for us all. Each year, the Bahamas is challenged by the arrival of thousands of illegal migrants from Haiti who, by perilous means, journey to our shores in search of a better way of life. Ensuring that justice and democracy prevail in Haiti, therefore, has a positive impact not only on the people of Haiti, but also on the Bahamas and indeed the entire region.

The role of the United Nations in matters of sustainable development is crucial, particularly with regard to challenges demanding a truly global response — challenges such as climate change. We commend the Secretary-General for bringing greater focus to the issue, with the convening of the high-level event on climate change last week, and are hopeful that the event will provide the necessary impetus for action when Member States meet in Bali later this year. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is indeed the appropriate forum for negotiations on a post-Kyoto agreement, and the political will demonstrated during the Secretary-General's recent high-level event should only bring closer focus to an agreed agenda in that regard.

For small island developing States and archipelagos like the Bahamas, climate change is a matter of critical importance. For many of us it is not just a matter of economics, but a matter of survival, as 80 per cent of our landmass is within five feet of mean sea level; even a one-degree rise in atmospheric temperature can have devastating ecological effects. Climate change is particularly challenging with respect to the potential effects on our tourism industry, which is our main industry and which generates some 60 per cent of the Bahamas's gross domestic product. We therefore cannot overemphasize the need for an ambitious mitigation agenda for the post-Kyoto regime. Recent studies have shown that there are many mitigation options available, and many of them are win-win. We must therefore, with unwavering commitment, explore these options in an open and inclusive environment.

For countries like the Bahamas, resources for adaptation are also essential. However, even access to existing funds can prove difficult given the country's gross national income. It is therefore vital that the relevant financial instruments and mechanisms be fully operationalized and/or improved so that they become more accessible and better address the peculiar circumstances and special needs of different countries. Further, there is a need for greater international cooperation with respect to the development of new technologies, as well as the transfer of such technologies in support of the sustainable development of small island developing States.

We in the Caribbean region must prepare for the possibility of continued increases in the incidence of natural hazards such as hurricanes, floods and earthquakes. Whether it is through assistance with hazard mapping and vulnerability assessment standardization or through the implementation of early warning systems, international cooperation has an important role to play in complementing national efforts to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters.

One step taken by the Caribbean region was the establishment of the Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance Facility under the aegis of the World Bank. We would like to thank those countries who have contributed to the fund. The Bahamas continues to press for the execution of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, as well as of complementary frameworks such as the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Hyogo Framework for Action. The time has come to reassess our collective response to these issues and to renew our efforts in support of sustainable development.

Adequate financial resources are essential in the implementation of the wider internationally agreed

development goals. Consideration of issues surrounding the follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development is particularly significant this year, as we prepare for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha next year. The Bahamas would wish for the deliberations of the upcoming High-level Dialogue, as well as the 2008 meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), to provide practical input into, and contribute to the success of that most important review conference.

The issue of strengthening the voice and participation of developing nations in international economic decision- making and norm-setting is especially important to the Bahamas. There is a definite need for concrete, realistic proposals to ensure the effective, permanent representation of developing countries, particularly small developing countries, not only in the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO but also in the other international economic and financial institutions, such as the Financial Stability Forum, the Financial Action Task Force and the Basel Committee.

The Bahamas welcomes the positive development in the area of international cooperation in tax matters, namely, the establishment of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters within the Economic and Social Council. The establishment of that Committee ensures that the interests of small developing States Members of the United Nations with different tax regimes will be factored into discussions and recommendations aimed at adopting mutually agreed standards that do not unduly favour the wealthy nations at the expense of meaningful development in States and jurisdictions not members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

We have reached the halfway mark in the time frame we set ourselves in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to undertake concrete steps by the year 2015 to address not only the economic and environmental challenges plaguing the international community and the Organization, but various social ills as well. In so doing, we gave those who are less fortunate hope for a better and more equitable world.

The MDG Report 2007 demonstrates that progress has been achieved in the reduction of the proportion of people living in poverty, the reduction of child and maternal mortality rates and the increase of primary school enrolment levels. However, nearly 20 million children worldwide continue to be severely malnourished and suffer from various preventable diseases that will undoubtedly affect their survival and rob them of their full potential. Overall progress in achieving equal rights and the empowerment of women is also too slow. My Government regards effective and practical measures to address poverty and the enhancement of educational partnerships to facilitate the development of our human resources to impact accelerated change as critical issues.

HIV/AIDS remains a global threat to the development, progress and stability of our societies. If the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010 is to be achieved, commitments entered into in the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS must be implemented. The necessary financial and technical support to developing countries must be provided to help bridge the gap and foster a more comprehensive and sustainable global response to this pandemic.

Equally important is the fact that 63 per cent of deaths worldwide are attributable to non-communicable diseases resulting from factors such as obesity, high cholesterol, high blood sugar, high blood pressure, tobacco use, physical inactivity, unhealthy diet and alcohol abuse. At a recent summit of CARICOM heads of Government, a number of action steps were identified. The Governments have agreed to establish, by mid-2008, comprehensive plans for the screening and management of chronic diseases and risk factors, so that, by 2012, 80 per cent of people in the Caribbean region with non-communicable diseases would receive quality care and have access to preventive education based on regional guidelines.

In spite of the efforts of various entities and the existence of United Nations conventions to protect the rights of women and children, discrimination and violence against women and children persist throughout the world. In an effort to better address this problem, the Bahamas has drafted a new Child Protective Act and a Domestic Violence Protection Order to enhance and provide greater protection to these vulnerable groups.

Last year the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) was adopted, marking an important step towards the elaboration of a counter-terrorism convention. The Bahamas continues to condemn terrorism and recognizes that while there may be instances when terrorism and criminal activities converge, the methodologies used to combat each of them are very different. Based on its own risk assessment, therefore, each Government must determine the level of resources that can be adopted and applied to counter-terrorism measures, particularly given the emphasis that the Strategy also places on addressing and preventing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

In prescribing counter-terrorism measures, care must be taken by the international community to preserve the tenet of due process. Care must also be taken to guard against the creation of disincentives that negatively impact countries with service-based economies. With respect to counter-terrorism measures, the Bahamas has adopted new legislation, ratified additional anti-terrorism conventions, increased security of large facilities, airports, docks and harbours developed a counter-terrorism intelligence network and provided anti-terrorism training for the police. Needless to say, such initiatives present a challenge and divert resources from our economic development.

The Bahamas reaffirms its commitment to fulfil its obligations to major international drug and counter-terrorism conventions and continues to support the concept of the expansion of the membership of the Security Council. The Bahamas maintains, however, that such expansion of the Security Council will not greatly increase the chances for our particular countries, such as the Bahamas.

While it is incumbent on Member States to fulfil their obligations that come with membership, the Organization must put in place effective management tools and create a system that would eliminate overspending and waste and create more fiscal accountability and proper oversight.

The Bahamas values the role of the United Nations as the custodian of the interests of the world's people, in particular the poor and the vulnerable. The Bahamas continues to believe that the United Nations Charter constitutes a viable and firm foundation on which the Organization can balance and achieve its objectives: to maintain international peace and security and, equally important, to promote development and economic and social progress.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kenneth Baugh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Jamaica.

Mr. Baugh (Jamaica): It is my great pleasure, Sir, to extend to you warmest and most sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly. The Jamaican delegation is confident that much will be accomplished during the sixty-second session under your able leadership. You can be assured of the support of the Jamaican delegation in that endeavour.

To your predecessor, Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, the Jamaican delegation extends its appreciation for her unstinting efforts in advancing the work of the General Assembly during its sixty-first session.

Jamaica also wishes to pay tribute to the laudable efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon who, since his assumption of office in January of this year, has moved forward in earnest to enhance the process of reform of the United Nations.

I am deeply honoured to be addressing the General Assembly at its sixty-second session on behalf of my country, Jamaica. The time has come to reassess our collective response to these issues and to renew our efforts in support of sustainable development.

Adequate financial resources are essential in the implementation of the wider internationally agreed development goals. Consideration of issues surrounding the follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development is particularly significant this year, as we prepare for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha next year. The Bahamas would wish for the deliberations of the upcoming High-level Dialogue, as well as the 2008 meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), to provide practical input into, and contribute to the success of that most important review conference.

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I am deeply honoured to be addressing the General Assembly at its sixty-second session on behalf of my country, Jamaica. Today, I especially restate my country's firm commitment to the ideals and principles of the United Nations and underscore Jamaica's strong support for multilateralism, which must underpin the core processes in the execution of the functions and responsibilities of the United Nations. In doing so, I am driven by our resolve for change, as well as by the need for unity and for the reinvigoration of the United Nations in order for it to effectively and efficiently achieve the fundamental purposes set out in its Charter.

As we begin this session, we must not lose sight of our strategic objectives and vision towards the maintenance of international peace and security; the development of friendly relations among nations; the achievement of international cooperation in the economic, social, cultural and humanitarian fields; and the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Looking back at the record over the past year, it is disconcerting that the challenges we face at the global level have not seen much discernable change. From a security point of view, the world continues to be plagued by seemingly incessant and protracted conflicts, such as those in the Middle East, parts of Africa and elsewhere. Millions of innocent persons are the victims of civil strife or are displaced as a result of violence and armed conflict. Terrorism, transnational organized crime and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction continue to threaten international peace and security.

From the economic and social perspective, we cannot escape the fact that we live in a world characterized by high levels of underdevelopment and social degradation — a world where too many people live in dehumanizing poverty. It is a world in which human security is being threatened by environmental

degradation. The experience of HIV/AIDS and the constant threat of new pandemics underscore our interconnectedness and interdependence, demanding universal cooperation and collective action.

All States, developed and developing, large and small, are vulnerable to those threats and must of necessity have a shared commitment to strengthening collective security and safeguarding world peace and security. No nation can address those challenges and threats entirely on its own. Sustained collective action and global cooperation are required to identify and shape a common vision and agreed objectives to deal with the complexities of our times. In recent years, we have renewed our commitment to the United Nations as the catalyst for effectively advancing the interests of our peoples in the areas of development, peace and security, and human rights.

Unquestionably, there have been pockets of success in global economic progress over the past decade. By and large, however, our commitments have not been matched by the desired implementation of the targets for meeting basic human needs, human security and sustainable development. It is clear that much more needs to be done if we are to achieve the development targets in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

The Government of Jamaica fully accepts that each country has the primary responsibility for setting development priorities through sound governance and policies. We believe that the goals that were solemnly agreed seven years ago are not overly ambitious and are still achievable. In that context, my Government is committed to taking further measures to pursue the objectives of the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals. We are committed to providing the necessary framework that will promote social inclusion, enhance productive capacity and employment, and facilitate investment and sustained economic growth.

But many developing countries, such as Jamaica, cannot do it alone. The realization of the development agenda is dependent not only on our own domestic capabilities, but equally on the genuine commitment of all Member States to pursue a global partnership for development, which is at the core of the strategy for development. We believe, therefore, that it is imperative that we move beyond the simple reiteration of principles and translate commitments into action. We must give life to the aspirations embodied in the outcomes of international conferences on the basis of mutual responsibility and mutual accountability, with a fair expectation that obligations, as agreed, will be fully undertaken.

In all that we do, we must recognize that progress and uplifting the poor benefits all of us. It can mean the difference between conflict and stability, between hope and despair. As developing countries strive to put in place practical national development strategies, developed country partners must support those efforts through greater market access, debt relief, private capital flows, technological transfers and improved global economic governance. Jamaica therefore calls for renewed focus, as well as the necessary political will, to honour the commitments made for development, and urges the fulfilment of all obligations that we have collectively embraced so that we may effect real change in the lives of millions of impoverished people around the world.

A critical role in that process is official development assistance, including the fulfilment by developed countries of the official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income. The High-Level Meeting on Financing for Development provides an opportunity to enhance collaboration with our partners towards achieving that goal.

The unique situation of middle-income developing countries, such as Jamaica, also requires special attention. That varied group of countries, with per capita gross domestic product spreading from $900 to $10,000, is by no means a homogeneous group and possesses its own particular vulnerabilities. Greater efforts must be made to address the needs of middle-income developing countries, in particular the high level of indebtedness that those countries face.

Globalization and economic liberalization have resulted in the increased exposure of developing countries to external economic forces over which they have little control. We should refuse to accept that globalization creates winners and losers. What we should strive for is a win-win and inclusive process in which the benefits and opportunities are more widely enjoyed across countries and regions.

An enabling international environment also requires a global trading system that is fair and equitable and that is conducive to development and

integration in the world economy. A continued cause of grave concern to Jamaica is therefore the current impasse in the negotiations in the Doha Development Round, in spite of commitments to work expeditiously towards implementing the development dimensions of the Doha work programme. We must summon the necessary political will to reignite trade negotiations, with the development agenda as the centrepiece of the discussions as we seek to integrate developing countries in the multilateral trading system.

It is important that the creation of a viable and equitable trade regime also recognize diversity in the levels of development and size of economies. A one-size-fits-all model disregards the complexities and unique circumstances of countries. Jamaica will therefore continue to insist that new trading arrangements take account of that differentiation, especially as it concerns small vulnerable economies. The principle of special and differential treatment seeks only to level the playing field and to give developing countries a fair chance to participate meaningfully in global trade. At the same time, we will also join other developing countries in pressing for the removal of support for agricultural products by certain developed countries as a precondition for further market access for such products.

We call for and join in continuous and concerted international efforts to fight the spread of communicable diseases, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and others, particularly bearing in mind that they are all preventable. The global impact of AIDS has been particularly devastating. The high prevalence in many countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, is cause for alarm. It should be noted that the pattern of high prevalence and high heterosexual transmission is strongly associated with poverty.

While noting the international response through the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, we stress the need for increased funding to help support developing countries to fight the pandemic. We are particularly concerned that the countries of the Caribbean, including Jamaica, are placed at a disadvantage in accessing the necessary funding to curtail the spread of the disease owing to their assigned middle-income status.

Implementing a global response to climate change must remain a priority as we seek consensus for combating global warming beyond 2012, when the Kyoto Protocol expires. As we prepare for the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bali, Indonesia, we are encouraged that the recent High-Level Event on Climate Change and the General Assembly informal debate on climate change reinforced the urgency with which issues pertaining to environmental sustainability have to be tackled.

The principle of common but differentiated responsibility must be applied across the board. We are equally convinced that the international community must assist small island developing States in incorporating climate change adaptation and mitigation concerns in national sustainable development plans and assist them by improving access to environmentally sound technology related to climate change.

Jamaica and other countries in the Caribbean are all too familiar with the adverse effects of climate change and associated phenomena, including the rise in sea-level and the increase in the frequency and intensity of hurricanes and other weather events that threaten the sustainable development, livelihoods and the very existence of small island developing States. In my own country, the onslaught of Hurricane Dean on 19 August resulted in the loss of life and extensive damage to infrastructure, property and the agricultural sector, as well as in the loss of livelihood for many.

The threat of terrorism transcends boundaries and has had a devastating impact on the economic development of States, whether directly or indirectly. It is imperative that we negotiate and conclude a comprehensive convention against terrorism. We must also invigorate disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

There is a need to comprehensively address the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, which have the capacity to kill and maim thousands of people. Jamaica has first-hand experience of high levels of gun violence and the unwarranted burden it places on our social and economic system. We urge the international community to give priority attention to this menace, including through the creation of a legally binding instrument containing stricter controls on the illegal trade in small arms and ammunition. Likewise,

we support the proposal for the establishment of an arms trade treaty.

A major priority of the United Nations is not only winning the peace, but more importantly keeping and sustaining the peace. Jamaica fully supports the work of the Peacebuilding Commission, which earlier this year celebrated its first anniversary and whose groundbreaking work is assisting in post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction. As a member of the Commission, Jamaica looks forward to the continuation of the dialogue as we seek to build on the successes of the recent past, always mindful that the countries under consideration require swift action to implement priority projects as part of the rehabilitation and reconstruction process.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) continues to be seized of developments in Haiti. We reaffirm the importance of the continued engagement of the international community and, in this regard, welcome the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to assist in the stabilization process. We also encourage support from the international community to meet the long-term social, economic and development needs of Haiti.

We must remain unwavering in our commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law. Much more needs to be done to ensure that the basic rights of individuals are universally protected and that transparent and accountable governance prevails at the local and international levels.

Jamaica is honoured to assume the Chairmanship of the Third Committee during the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, as part of our commitment to ensure that human rights are promoted and protected globally. In this regard, we are particularly keen to help guide the Committee's work in promoting and protecting the rights of marginalized and vulnerable groups. Jamaica recognizes the importance of the protection of the human rights of women, which is critical to the international processes aimed at achieving gender equality and the development of women.

Late last year a significant milestone was achieved with the adoption by the United Nations of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with the distinction of being one of the most supported conventions at its opening for signature in March 2007. Jamaica is pleased to have been the first country to ratify the Convention and encourages others to accede to the Convention as a sign of their commitment to ensuring that the rights and dignity of the disabled are promoted and protected. We also welcome the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Darfur remains a matter of grave concern and preoccupation of the international community. Jamaica therefore welcomes the recent unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1769 (2007) for the deployment of the joint African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur to the region. We are encouraged that by certain developments that indicate that this kind of cooperation has begun and urge that these efforts be intensified.

The process of reform of the United Nations seems prolonged and challenging, with little or no consensus in the various proposals put forward for improvements in the functioning of the United Nations and its main organs. We must redouble our efforts to revitalize the General Assembly, so that it can effectively carry out its role and responsibility as the chief deliberative and policy-making organ of the United Nations. We must also work towards a reformed Security Council that is more inclusive, more representative and more transparent.

This year marks the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. Member States of the Caribbean Community are heartened by the overwhelming solidarity of the international community in marking the event at the special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly in March and other activities during the course of the year to memorialize the victims of this egregious period in our history.

A significant element of the commemoration is a plan to honour the victims of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery, through the erection of a permanent memorial in the halls of the United Nations. We are grateful to Member States that have contributed or pledged towards the permanent memorial account that has been established and look forward to your further support and contributions towards the erection of the memorial.

We are 192 Member States; we have the fundamental tools and the required level of expertise to effectively address the major challenges facing us today. It is now clear that we must also have a steadfast will and a shared commitment towards a radical change from the existing mindset in favour of positive action, if the United Nations is to successfully respond to challenges, which continue to hamper the attainment of its objectives for peace and sustainable development.

In calling for radical change in the existing mindset and in the way we discourse and take actions on international issues, we should be guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter. A change in our mindset will require a rethinking on the part of all Member States as we seek to promote world peace and achieve economic and social development. It will also require a deep search in the conscience of all States as we seek to adhere to our obligations under international law with due regard for the collective will of the international community.

This radical change in the existing mindset will necessarily require us to be more responsible as Member States of a united Organization, more responsible as citizens of this one world and more focused on the shared responsibilities that come with our membership in the United Nations.

Let us not falter in our obligation to ensure that the Organization not only remains responsive to the vast array of concerns and demands of its diverse membership, but that it is able to do so without compromising the noble ideals and principles on which it was founded. This process begins with a conscious determination and political resolve to transform not only our modus operandi, but the thinking that informs it. Jamaica stands ready to play its part in this endeavour and calls upon all Member States to do likewise.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ahmad Allam-Mi, Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Allam-Mi (Chad) (*spoke in French*): Please accept our warm congratulations, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the presidency of our Assembly. We are convinced that you possess all the necessary qualities for the sound direction of our work. My country assures you of its support as you carry out your important task.

We also wish to convey our gratitude to your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for the efficiency with which she guided the work of our sixty-first session. I also wish to pay a well-deserved tribute to our Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who has been constantly playing a significant role since his election in advancing the ideals of our Organization.

One important event has caught the attention of Chad. On 25 September, the Security Council adopted unanimously resolution 1778 (2007) authorizing an international operation on the eastern border of Chad and the north-east border of the Central African Republic. That operation — and we should stress the defensive nature of its mandate: the protection of refugees, displaced persons, civilian populations and humanitarian workers — is something that in Chad we are very satisfied to see since it will lighten the heavy burden borne thus far by the Chadian local police since the beginning of the crisis in Darfur.

Chad also wishes to thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the friendly countries who have supported the local Chadian police. At this point, I wish also to pay tribute to their courage and dedication because they did their best in order to accomplish their sensitive and dangerous mission.

The new operation will be able to rely on the availability and cooperation of Chadian authorities. We venture to hope that it will stabilize and create conditions for the reconstruction of the eastern part of our country, which has been destroyed by incursions of the Janjaweed militias from the Sudan and other armed groups from Darfur. It will also especially require that the Chadian displaced persons, who have so far been neglected by the international community, be reinstalled in their original localities.

Above and beyond our hopes of stabilization and reconstruction in the eastern part of our country, we have the legitimate hope that the Darfur crisis will end. More than any country, Chad would gain by that, especially since our populations in the eastern part of Chad have been the victims of the crisis as often if not more than our sister populations of the Sudan in Darfur. For that reason, our country has tirelessly endeavoured to restore peace and security to Darfur. In that regard, no one can ignore the extremely important role played by the President of the Republic, His

Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itmo, in supporting the peacekeeping measures taken by the international community.

The Republic of Chad has no intention of departing from that course. For that reason we will make the fullest possible contribution to the success of the resumed inter-Sudanese peace talks on Darfur that are scheduled for Tripoli on 27 October. We have also contributed to the preparation of the peace talks through our participation in meetings bringing together the non-signatory movements of the Abuja Peace Agreement, including meetings at Abeche in Chad, at Asmara in Eritrea, at Tripoli in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and at Arusha in Tanzania, as well as the last Seminar of N'Djaména in Chad — all of which has taken place under the auspices of the joint mediation of the United Nations and the African Union.

We have just underscored our resolve to work for peace in Darfur in particular, and of course, in the Sudan in general, because that work is in the interest of peace and security in the subregion of Central Africa in general and of Chad in particular. We all need peace among our neighbours in order to fend off any risk to the stabilization of our countries and to continue, guided by the inspiration of His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itmo, President of the Republic and Head of State, to build upon the democratic process that our country has been committed to since 1990, as well as to ensure the peace, security and social well-being of the Chadian people.

In that regard, we should highlight that, since last year, Chadian political life has witnessed some positive developments. A number of military and political high officials of the Chadian rebellion have had their legal rights restored, individually or in small groups or with their entire organization.

On 4 March 2007, a new Government was formed under the leadership of one of the well known figures of the political opposition to the presidential majority — Prime Minister Sem Nouradine Delwa Kassire Koumakoye. Moreover, the new Government has responded to the expectations of the opposition by deciding to postpone the legislative and communal elections in order to wait for the conclusions of a political dialogue begun under the auspices of the European Union. That dialogue is aimed at strengthening the rule of law and the democratic process by organizing the elections under conditions that are acceptable to all actors in our political life, or at least by the greater majority, which is devoted to the peaceful settlement of political conflicts and has renounced recourse to weapons and anti-constitutional changes.

That political dialogue led to the signing of a political agreement on 13 August 2007. The signing of that important agreement by the parties of the governmental majority and the democratic opposition clearly stems from the constant resolve of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itmo, to establish a peaceful political life in the country.

Furthermore, we wish also to warmly thank our development partners, in particular the European Union, whose valuable assistance enabled us to produce the agreement that we consider historic. That new fact in Chad's political life has enabled us to note with great satisfaction that a number of political exiles have returned or intend to return without delay to the country. We owe that situation to the facilitation of the heads of State who are friends of Chad and we mention in particular His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba of Gabon and His Excellency Mr. Boni Yayi of Benin. In addition to the notable progress with the democratic opposition and the Chadian political exiles we note that we are looking forward — with the support of the guide to the Libyan revolution and the mediator of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), our brother Muammar Al-Qadhafi — to continuing with the useful discussions taking place in Tripoli with the armed movements aimed at reaching agreements with those organizations that have not yet rejoined the great Chadian family. We hope that those movements will renounce any recourse to weapons and express their expectations within the peaceful framework set by the historic political agreement of 13 August 2007 and with respect for the institutions of the Republic.

It is our view that all political initiatives having to do with national reconciliation should fall within the framework of the political agreement of 13 August and should contribute to strengthening the State apparatus for the benefit of the general interest. For we should not forget that since its independence, Chad has known only conflict or post-conflict situations, often, indeed, internal, but including in particular those fuelled from the outside to weaken the State or to topple the country's institutions. This is why we count on the international community to unreservedly condemn all

attempts to destabilize the Chadian State, and also all who use unconstitutional means, notably force, to seize power. The Chadian people, victims of insecurity due to the interminable armed struggles for power, condemn these sterile struggles and rely on the democratic political actors and on the international community to block the path to violence.

If we must extend a hand to the rebels, whose causes sometimes seem to be from the world of a revolutionary utopia, this should not be done to the detriment of the highest interest of the rule of law and of democracy. Unhappiness is at the heart of rebellions. We find mercenaries in the pay of someone from the exterior, and adventurers who use it as a source of commerce to gain unwarranted material advantages or to satisfy personal ambitions in exchange for their return to legality, in disdain of the authority of the State apparatus, of the law and of the country's regulations.

After this brief overview of Chadian political questions, allow me to raise some other issues regarding today's challenges: globalization with its hopes and anguishes, poverty, inequitable international trade, terrorism, the AIDS pandemic, and so forth. A number of international meetings have been held on these topics and on others. Resolutions and recommendations have been adopted. However, no decisive advances have been made in these areas. We can only hope that the international community will honour its commitments and that the richest will keep their promises vis-à-vis the poorest.

We cannot simply ignore another important event, the High-level Event on Climate Change and its consequences, which was held right here. We hope that the international community will learn lessons with a view to acting instead of indulging in fine statements, as was the case after the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Kyoto.

Yes, we need to act, and for us the most tragic case deserving the attention of the international community is that of the shrinking of Lake Chad, whose surface has been reduced in a few decades from 25,000 square kilometres to 2,500 square kilometres. Saving Lake Chad would not only contribute to the struggle against disastrous climate change on a planetary level, but would also meet the needs of 25 million people in the countries adjacent to the Lake.

Another issue is just as worrisome, and that is the conflict situations in Africa and on other continents. How can we not take a stand? We applaud the efforts of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations to find lasting solutions to the conflicts in Africa or elsewhere in the world.

This prompts us to underscore the importance of another event that has caught our attention. That is the Security Council meeting held at the level of heads of State on 25 September on the question of peace and security in Africa. We are mindful of the Council's steadily growing interest in Africa, and that meeting seems to pave the way for the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and the AU, especially with a view to building the capacities of the AU so that it can accomplish its peace missions in the best possible conditions. This is the moment to condemn the recent barbarous attacks on the African forces in Darfur and to express our condolences to the families of the missing.

We have great hope for the settlement of all crises in the framework of the rebirth of multilateralism and collective security, which our Secretary-General has very strongly endorsed: hopes for peace in Côte d'Ivoire, in Western Sahara, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the Horn of Africa, in the Middle East and so forth.

Before I conclude, I would like to recall that we have constantly condemned before this Assembly all forms of violence and intolerance, especially their most extreme form — terrorism. We reaffirm our condemnation and our commitment to fighting these phenomena. We would like to reaffirm our commitment to strive to eliminate all sources of conflicts and all the threats that jeopardize peace and security around the world.

In this regard, I wish to recall the need to respect the principles of peaceful coexistence, which are respect for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of States. This, of course, prompts us to reaffirm our devotion to respect for internationally recognized historical borders. We cite as an example our attachment to the policy of a single China and our opposition to Taiwan's attempts to bring about a kind of accession to the United Nations, under whatever name they might choose.

This also prompts us to express respect for the sovereign right of States to develop nuclear energy for

peaceful purposes. And we welcome the good arrangements to find solutions to the question of nuclear energy through negotiations and to find a peaceful solution to the problem of the dissemination of weapons of mass destruction.

This last prompts us once again to launch a pressing appeal to our Assembly, especially to the permanent members of the Security Council, to redress the injustice of the African continent being the only continent that does not have a permanent member seat on the Council, when the bulk of the Council's agenda is comprised of African situations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Dermot Ahern, T.D., Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland.

Mr. Ahern (Ireland): First of all, Mr. President, may I congratulate you on your election and wish you well in the months ahead.

Upon its formation earlier this year, the Irish Government set itself the goal of becoming a model Member State of the this great Organization. We have set out an ambitious programme to be a world leader in development assistance, rapid response to humanitarian disasters and conflict resolution.

This is because our own history shows that there is a path from famine to plenty and from conflict to peace. And from that history has grown a determination, in ordinary Irish men and women, to stand in the vanguard of the fight against conflict, hunger and the denial of human rights, a fight best fought by a strong and equally determined United Nations — a fight we cannot afford to lose.

It is also because after six decades, the core goal of the United Nations — universal peace and security — unfortunately still eludes us. Today, in spite of all our efforts, violent conflict remains all too common.

The causes of conflict are many. But very often, it is in the persistence of poverty and in the denial of human rights that we find the causes of conflict, the enduring results of conflict and the seeds of future conflict. In making peace, we must be as creative and as determined as those waging war.

The range of instruments now available strengthens our collective capacity to resolve conflict. We must use that full array with determination now. We must ensure that the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund are organized and resourced to fulfil their important mandate. We must maintain our support for United Nations-mandated peacekeeping operations, which today are at an all-time high in terms of their size, scope and complexity. We must also support strengthened United Nations efforts in the fields of conflict prevention and resolution. We in Ireland will play our part.

My Government has decided to significantly increase its commitment to conflict resolution, including through the establishment of a designated unit in the Foreign Ministry, the creation of an academic Centre for Conflict Resolution, a system of roving ambassadors to affected regions and an annual fund of €25 million to assist conflict resolution in the developing world.

In the years ahead, we will also work to strengthen the capacity of the African Union and subregional organizations to make and build peace for themselves. We will focus our efforts on peacemaking during conflict and peacebuilding after conflict. We will also work on identifying, distilling and sharing the lessons of conflict resolution. We will be particularly active in Africa, including through working with our partner Governments under our Irish Aid programme. We will explore the links between climate change and conflict, because climate change directly threatens not only the most vulnerable but all of our shared goals of progress, peace and development.

The focus of our foreign policy on rights, development and now conflict resolution underlines once again Ireland's commitment to the global agenda of the United Nations. But this convergence is also underscored by our own national experience of peacemaking. Speaking here in New York in April 1969, before the appalling escalation of violence in Northern Ireland, one of my distinguished predecessors, Frank Aiken, said "I think there is sufficient wisdom if it can only be energized in our section of the world, in these islands off the North West of Europe, to settle the problem." For far too long that sufficient wisdom eluded us.

For almost 40 years it has been my duty and that of my predecessors as Minister for Foreign Affairs to brief this Assembly on the search for peace on the island of Ireland. I am particularly delighted to report

that perhaps, save for general updates on progress, this will no longer be necessary.

The conflict in Northern Ireland lasted for more than three decades and was made apparently insoluble by issues of national, cultural and religious identity, contested historical narratives and claims of sovereignty, all hardened by the direct experiences of division, inequality and violence.

Since the ceasefires of the mid-1990s and the negotiation of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, there has been much better news to report. But the final steps to the full implementation of that Agreement were not completed until earlier this year. With the formation of the power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive, bringing together historic opponents from across the political divide, we have opened an extraordinary new chapter in the history of the island of Ireland.

Legacies of separation and distrust remain, and the inevitable challenges and difficulties of normal politics will need wise and sensitive management. But there is an overwhelming consensus that this new beginning can be nurtured and sustained.

The task is no longer to find peace, but to maintain and build on the peace we have found. I do not believe our success offers a universal, transferable formula, but I do believe that our experience of failure and then success over 40 years provides insights and lessons worth sharing. One of the specific tasks of our conflict resolution initiative is to codify those insights and lessons. But today I will offer just a few.

First, in the end, those who are part of the problem must be part of the solution — not because we approve of their actions or beliefs, but because without them it is all too easy for an agreement among others to be destroyed.

Secondly, inclusive dialogue must, however, take place on the basis of clear and guaranteed principles. In Ireland, these were consent, non-violence and parity of esteem.

Thirdly, partnerships between Governments and involving sympathetic third parties — in our case the United States and the European Union — can develop comprehensive frameworks within which enduring settlements can be reached.

Fourthly, it is often necessary to take risks for peace — but those risks must be carefully calibrated. Timing is of the essence and so is patience, and there are times when contacts must be private and at arm's length.

Fifthly, our experience demonstrates the need to address all issues, all of the causes of conflict, comprehensively, no matter how difficult and intractable they may be, and even if they have to be resolved in different time frames.

Sixth, popular endorsement of an agreement through the ballot box makes it immensely more legitimate and durable.

Finally, without effective and faithful implementation, again often with external assistance, an agreement's viability and credibility can quickly ebb away.

On a more practical and operational level, we have devised and implemented innovative arrangements for dealing with many of the issues that dominate peacemaking and peacebuilding in our case: constitutional change, power sharing, cross-border cooperation, transitional justice, policing and security reform, equality and human rights, conflict over symbols, arms decommissioning and prisoner release.

In our own process, we have learned much from others, particularly from the instance of South Africa. Together, I hope we can, in Frank Aiken's term, develop both sufficient wisdom and sufficient will to resolve enduring and complex conflicts.

Working with a strengthened United Nations and sharing lessons with one another, I passionately hope we can advance the day when political leaders from other regions of the world blighted by conflict can announce in this forum that peace has come to them too.

Northern Ireland has been added to the list of conflicts resolved. But the road to universal peace is still blocked by conflicts old, new and threatened.

Today, across the world we stand with the people of Burma. The courage of the Buddhist monks and nuns and their supporters has won universal admiration. The efforts of its regime to conceal its brutality behind a wall of silence have failed. It has been rightly condemned for its violent response. I call on its leaders at long last to respond constructively to

the wishes of the people, to stop their violence and to release Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners. The process of national reconciliation and democratization must begin in earnest, and we hope that the Secretary-General's Special Envoy will be able to report progress on his return here in a few days.

We look to the Security Council to respond effectively to the compelling calls of the international community. It is neither acceptable nor true to argue, as some of its members have, that the situation in Burma is not a question of international peace and security. The potential regional consequences of the crisis are evident to all. This places a particular onus on the Governments of China, India and of the countries of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). I welcome the encouraging recent signs of positive and concerned engagement and urge them to redouble their efforts.

Within the European Union, Ireland has long taken a strong and principled position on Burma. We are looking urgently at how to increase the pressure on the regime, including through further European Union restrictive measures, without harming the ordinary people, whose suffering is already so great.

As it is for people across the world, Darfur is a matter of grave concern in Ireland. We have made it a priority for our diplomacy and our Irish Aid programme. We must solve the humanitarian and security crisis while simultaneously establishing the foundations for longer-term peace and development. We urge the full, effective and speedy deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. Khartoum must actively cooperate and at last desist from all obstruction. Rebel groups must also play their part. The recent attack on peacekeepers in Darfur was an outrage and was rightly condemned here. I would like to express my sympathies and those of the Irish Government to the families of those killed.

In keeping with our proud tradition of peacekeeping, Ireland expects to make a substantial contribution to the United Nations-mandated mission to Chad and the Central African Republic to help aid refugees and address the regional dimension of the Darfur crisis.

All those who are party to the conflict must commit to the political talks in Libya next month. I welcome the Secretary-General's establishment of a trust fund to support these talks, and I pledge Ireland's support in that respect. If commitments are not fulfilled and progress does not materialize, Ireland will support further sanctions against non-cooperating parties.

I am particularly and gravely concerned at the increasingly serious humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe. The current Southern African Development Community initiative, led by President Mbeki, offers the best hope for progress and I would encourage all those involved to redouble their efforts to agree on a new political dispensation offering real political reform and economic recovery for all Zimbabweans.

The situation in the Middle East is always high on our agenda. There has been a collective international failure to establish a credible political process leading to a two-State solution. But today there are possibilities for change. The outlines of a viable settlement are clear to everyone, even if it will require difficult and painful compromises. Ireland strongly supports the dialogue between Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas. We are also encouraged by the determination of the Arab States to pursue the historic Arab Peace Initiative. We share the hope that the international meeting now in preparation under Secretary Rice's leadership will indeed be serious and substantive and set in train a transformation of the political landscape and the lives of its people.

Ireland's historic commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation continues. We are also active in seeking a comprehensive response to the curse of cluster munitions, the appalling effects of which are all too evident in Lebanon and elsewhere. As a contribution to the collaborative effort launched in Oslo last February, Ireland will host a diplomatic conference in May 2008, which we hope will finalize the first-ever international agreement on cluster munitions.

The establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) spurred our efforts to tackle poverty and its consequences. I greatly welcome the Secretary-General's establishment of the MDG Africa Steering Group to lead a determined push to achieve our targets for 2015.

Ireland is doing its part. We are currently spending more than 0.5 per cent of our gross national product on overseas development aid and will reach 0.7 per cent by 2012. We have substantially increased our support to humanitarian relief operations and to tackling HIV/AIDS.

But we know that more needs to be done. The donor community is failing the test set by the MDGs. Overseas aid has fallen by 5 per cent in real terms. It is not acceptable in today's world that there are still 980 million people living in abject poverty, that half of the developing world has no access to basic sanitation or that half a million women will die in pregnancy or childbirth each year. Perhaps the most damning fact is that one in seven people on this Earth today do not get enough food to eat to have a healthy and productive life. That figure jumps to one in four in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Kariyawasam (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.

To help meet that most basic of challenges, Ireland has established a Hunger Task Force to examine the root causes of that enduring source of misery, disease and death. It will help us contribute to the MDG goal of halving hunger and poverty. I am delighted that the experts on the Hunger Task Force include Jeffrey Sachs, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the MDGs.

Ireland will maintain and increase its commitment to the work of the United Nations in the fields of peace and security, development and human rights. There is no mystery to the challenges facing us, even if they are formidable. Our generation is uniquely equipped to know what it will take to deal with them. We have the scientific knowledge, the experience, the resources and, through this Organization, the mechanism for cooperation to rise to these challenges. We must summon sufficient wisdom and will to do so.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Patrick Pillary, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Seychelles.

Mr. Pillary (Seychelles): Allow me to first extend to all of you the fraternal greetings and best wishes of President Michel of the Republic of Seychelles, the Government and the people of Seychelles on the convening of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. Seychelles is proud to be here today, as a partner and an ally, to further our international efforts, to address the challenges that are central to the future of all humanity and that pose a threat to global political and economic stability and security.

I join previous speakers in congratulating Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. His election to the helm of this Assembly is a testimony to the high esteem in which the international community holds him and his country, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. I take this opportunity, too, to express my country's sincere appreciation to his predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa of Bahrain, for her outstanding stewardship of the work of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

Allow me to commend and to renew Seychelles' strong support to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the determination and strong will he has shown since the beginning of his tenure in office, in strengthening the role of the United Nations.

Seychelles remains unwavering in its support of the United Nations. Our commitment has not changed since we joined this Organization 31 years ago. More than ever, we believe that the world needs strong and effective multilateralism. Indeed, we are convinced that the most effective means of advancing our collective interests is through the United Nations.

Seychelles is pleased that the overarching theme of this year's session is responding to climate change, as the General Assembly of the United Nations is the forum for concerted and comprehensive action in addressing a defining issue of our time.

Fifteen years ago, in 1992, Seychelles, a small island developing State, was the second country to accede to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). We were convinced then, as we are now, that the Convention's primary objective of reducing the dangerous levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere must be realized in order to protect the environment and avoid serious socio-economic disruptions. Six years later, in 1998, Seychelles reiterated its commitment to the ideals of the UNFCCC by adopting the Kyoto Protocol. However, the attempts of the international community to act on those international agreements have been modest at best.

The challenge of development has never been higher on the international agenda. However, the adverse impacts of climate change are a major barrier for the achievement of sustainable development goals in many countries, especially small island developing

States, which are recognized as being most vulnerable to climate change.

We must emphasize again that for the majority of small island developing States, agriculture, fisheries and tourism have for a long time been the mainstay of survival and economic development. Let us not forget that small island developing States are home to a sizeable proportion of the world's biodiversity and that the majority of the species are endemic and increasingly under threat because of climate change.

In Seychelles, the fisheries sector is a key pillar of our economy. It is expected that changes in climate may cause migratory shifts in tuna aggregations to other locations, thus depriving our country of one of its main sources of income. Moreover, inshore and traditional fishing, the mainstay of local fishermen and a major source of food, is also highly threatened. Food security on islands is at stake.

The impacts of climate change on the tourism sector are also expected to be significant, and that is why we believe that support for economic diversification towards other revenue-generating sectors in small island States is more than necessary.

Climate change is also a security issue. But it is not merely a matter of narrow national security — it has a new dimension. It is a question of our collective security and responsibility in a fragile and increasingly interdependent world, where the notion of borders has undergone a powerful symbolic transformation.

It is now up to politicians, businessmen and civil society to continue the work accomplished by scientists. The peoples of the world are increasingly looking to their leaders to take action, and the time is now. A week ago, at a meeting of the Global Island Partnership in Rome, our President, James Michel, launched the Sea Level Rise Foundation, as an attempt to ensure that island nations have the capacity to adapt to climate change. Together we are mobilizing leadership, gathering resources and sharing skills, knowledge, technologies and innovation in a cost-effective and sustainable way that will catalyse action for conservation and sustainable livelihoods on islands and low-lying areas in the face of climate change.

We count on the valuable support of the international community for ensuring the success of this noble and important endeavour. We call on the developed countries to take a strong lead and commitment in combating climate change. Aspirational global emissions reduction goals are not sufficient. We believe that the Kyoto Protocol paves the way forward for Annex I countries to fulfil their commitments under UNFCCC. We urge those parties to commit to their legally binding targets and to translate them into concrete actions for the reduction of their gas emissions.

We believe that a United Nations-based multilateral approach that builds on the Kyoto Protocol framework is the only decisive way of moving forward. There cannot be any doubt as to the major importance of the first steps taken at Kyoto and of the quantum improvements brought about by the provisions of the Protocol. The size and urgency of the problem requires that we take bold initiatives and compromises.

However, as the globe suffers because of climate change, it is essential that the international community as a whole be formally and unequivocally reminded that neither the efforts made thus far in implementing UNFCCC, nor the emissions reduction targets, set on average at 5.2 per cent, adopted in Kyoto represent an adequate effort to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at safe levels. We know that we need to do much more. In that regard, we would like to take this opportunity to praise the recent work accomplished by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in urging the need for deeper cuts in greenhouse gasses of 25 per cent to 40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020. Moreover, we would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation for the determination shown by our Secretary-General in facilitating the international dialogue to address the problem.

It is now up to us to build the political momentum needed in order to ensure that a comprehensive agreement is met at the world summit on climate change in Bali, Indonesia. There is an urgent need to ensure that developing nations, including small island developing States, can continue to develop and prosper in an equitable manner. Small island developing States need to be equipped financially, technically and technologically to adapt to global climate change and sea level rise without redirecting their limited resources from sustainable development.

Allow me to now turn briefly to other issues that are of particular importance to Seychelles.

First of all, Seychelles recognizes that globalization has the potential to advance human development throughout the world. But it is not automatic, for globalization has also increased our vulnerability, insecurity and the possibility of marginalization.

It is internationally recognized that trade can be an important source of financing for development. In this particular context, Seychelles strongly believes that more emphasis should be placed on the development dimension of small island developing States in multilateral trade negotiations, in recognition of their specificities and structural handicaps. Moreover, in our view, ownership of development orientations by recipient countries is the precondition for the emergence of a true partnership in development cooperation.

Furthermore, it is extremely important that the whole issue of development policies and cooperation be monitored closely within the international system. Decisions affecting development are being taken in different arenas, forums and agencies. Increasingly, there is the need to ensure coherence in policies and programmes. The international system currently does not have an effective mechanism for conducting such an exercise. We reiterate our belief that one of the urgent tasks of the moment is to create a mechanism within the international architecture that will focus on trade, finance, technology and development policy in an integrated manner.

Seychelles remains determined to build its economy based on our assertion of the principle of responsibility for our own development. Our efforts at economic re-engineering have been very dynamic. The Seychelles Strategy 2017 commits the Government of the Republic of Seychelles to doubling the gross domestic product in the next 10 years. The reforms being undertaken will not only ensure that our economy continues to grow but also will facilitate the participation of every Seychellois in wealth creation. That is the commitment of the Government of Seychelles. However, owing to our inherent vulnerabilities, we need the support of the international community in guaranteeing that the considerable successes achieved so far in the economic and social sectors are not lost.

I have spoken thus far on climate and development issues, which are both closely related to other critical areas of the international agenda. One such area concerns peace and security. It is tragic and painful to witness the continued cycle of violence around the world. Peace accords and ceasefire agreements do not, unfortunately, entail a cessation of hostilities.

We support the strong will shown by the United Nations, working alongside the African Union, in ensuring that peace and security are brought to the people in the Darfur region of the Sudan. Seychelles associates itself with all those calling and working for peace in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and elsewhere.

Against the backdrop of increased violence from war and terrorism, it is clear to us that violence and the use of force cannot be the answer. We must embrace multilateralism and insist that international relations be guided by the rule of law as the basis for our collective security.

The United Nations remains a significant partner and interlocutor of the modern development and progress of Seychelles. It is with complete faith, as a small island developing State, that we renew our trust in the principles of the Charter. We cannot stop emphasizing the compelling urgency of altering the design and function of the Security Council, if it is to fulfil the mandate conferred by the Charter of 1945 in the realities of the world today.

With regard to the General Assembly, what is needed is a resuscitation and use of the powers of the General Assembly and the assertion of its role as the principal organ of the United Nations. The Assembly is a forum of equals. Its pronouncements and policy decisions must carry the stamp of legitimacy as the voice of the international community. However, we must emphasize that, irrespective of whatever institutional arrangements we may devise, in the final analysis, it is the commitment and political will among Member States alone that can make the system work.

(*spoke in French*)

In the demanding context of globalization, regions are players with which the multilateral organizations, donors and international investors devote increasingly sustained attention. The regional approach is also the best bastion when it comes to mounting defences against terrorism, insecurity, banditry, trafficking, pandemics, or to providing an efficient response to disasters in real time. A region is,

ultimately, for the countries that comprise it, the strongest legal space in which those countries can obtain the natural resources and raw materials that they share.

That is, therefore, the aim of the Indian Ocean Commission, which strives to defend the interests of all countries of the Indian Ocean in all areas. What it represents today and the place that it occupies in the landscape of regional cooperation organizations is due, in large part, to the specialized agencies of the United Nations. I would very much wish for that support to be strengthened in the coming months, so that the Commission truly has the means to achieve its ambitions. The observer status that the Commission obtained in the General Assembly on 4 December 2006 enabled our regional organization to acquire additional legitimacy to work with the specialized agencies of the United Nations. We welcome those new prospects and paths of cooperation.

(*spoke in English*)

The future of generations to come rests not so much on the vigour of our debate and the declarations we make in this Assembly at its sixty-second session, but on the action we take. Our people are demanding that, collectively, we emerge with a clear vision, that we display the courage and unrelenting commitment to build a world of peace, justice and equity that we can inhabit together in true harmony. Let us here resolve to build one world where every man, woman and child can realize the true purpose and fulfilment of life.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yeshey Dorgi, chairman of the delegation of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Mr. Dorji (Bhutan): I offer my delegation's congratulations to the President for his election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session and assure him of our support and cooperation. My delegation would also like to convey our appreciation to his predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for the able manner in which she guided the work of the Assembly at the sixty-first session. We also convey our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for the excellent leadership he provides to our Organization.

We are gratified that climate change and the Millennium Development Goals are among the top priorities of this session's presidency. The irony of climate change is that its worst impact will be on the developing world, particularly small and island developing countries, who are least responsible for the problem. As complex as the issue is, climate change is inextricably linked to development and the debate engenders issues of equity, fairness and the right of countries to grow economically. The challenges of climate change must, therefore, be addressed within the framework of sustainable development bearing in mind the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Bhutan has two major concerns about climate change. First is the potential adverse impact on agriculture, which is the mainstay of 79 per cent of our population. Second, more serious and immediate, is the rate at which Himalayan glaciers are receding. Bhutan has approximately 3,000 glacial lakes, of which 24 have been identified as potentially dangerous. Floods caused by glacial lake outbursts have caused devastation in the past, and future outbursts will be far worse. Our capacity to carry out research, monitor developments, forecast outbursts and take mitigation measures is severely constrained by a lack of scientific, technical and financial resources.

In the Millennium Declaration of 2000, world leaders undertook to channel the fruits of globalization to benefit all people and lift one sixth of humanity from extreme poverty. At the midpoint between the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the target date of 2015, reports, including the 2007 Millennium Development Goals Report, provide a mixed picture at best. The Secretary-General has rightly said that the world does not need new promises to achieve the MDGs. What is needed is urgent and concerted action by political leaders and stakeholders to meet, in their entirety, the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration and in the Monterrey Consensus adopted at the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development and at the 2005 World Summit.

The 2006 midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 revealed that the least developed countries were unlikely to achieve all the goals and objectives of the Programme of Action, and therefore the MDGs, if trends continued. It is the moral and political imperative of the international community to help the least developed countries through strong supportive

global programmes, measures and policies. However, one year later, the situation remains largely unchanged.

Geographical constraints present enormous challenges to landlocked developing countries. Bhutan is working closely with the group of landlocked developing countries to address those challenges through the cooperation of transit countries and the international community. The needs of the landlocked countries are well-documented and there is a road map for global partnership set out in the Almaty Programme of Action.

Bhutan has made tremendous socio-economic progress during the past 45 years. However, there are many hurdles to overcome before we can stand on our own feet and be self-reliant. We are determined to achieve the cherished goal of self-reliance at the earliest time possible. Until then, we will have to rely on external assistance and support. Here, I would like to record my country's appreciation to bilateral and multilateral donors.

We hope that under the leadership of the President the Assembly will undertake results-oriented intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform in order to bring that issue to its logical conclusion. As we have stated before, Bhutan supports India, Japan and their G4 group partners for permanent membership. We also support Africa's claim for permanent seats.

My country has as much interest in the work of the Security Council as others and would like to see it adapt to current demands and realities. Since becoming a Member in 1971, my country has served in a number of important bodies of the United Nations, but not in the Security Council. We are confident of our capacity to contribute directly to the work of the Council. Bhutan therefore announced in 1999 its candidature for a non-permanent seat for the period 2013-2014. If realized, Bhutan would gain entry into the Council after four decades in the United Nations. It is our sincere hope that the General Assembly will support Bhutan's candidacy during the elections in 2012.

Terrorism strikes at the very foundation of humanism and cannot be justified under any circumstances. This evil must be countered through cooperation at the bilateral, regional and global levels. At the global level, greater efforts must be made to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and conclude a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. Within our region, the leaders of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, at their 14th summit meeting, held in New Delhi in April 2007, reaffirmed their commitment to collectively fight terrorism. That is a positive development, but more needs to be done to rid the region of this menace.

Allow me to briefly apprise this body of developments in my country. The development model pursued by Bhutan is based on the philosophy of "Gross National Happiness", a concept conceived by our fourth King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, in the early 1970s. Gross National Happiness is premised on the belief that, if happiness is the ultimate desire of every individual, then it is the responsibility and purpose of the State to create conditions that enable citizens to realize this desire. We are glad that the concept of Gross National Happiness is drawing increasing global attention and we stand ready to share our experiences in this regard.

Bhutan is now set on the irreversible path to a full-fledged democratic constitutional monarchy. The people of Bhutan are looking forward to 2008, when parliamentary democracy will be introduced. Next year, Bhutan will also celebrate the formal coronation of His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and the centenary of the Wangchuck dynasty. As we stand at the threshold of these momentous developments, the people of Bhutan look to our friends and well-wishers and the global community for support and inspiration.

Before I conclude, allow me to refer to the comments made yesterday by the honourable Foreign Minister of Nepal regarding the problem of the people in camps in Nepal. As her comments were less than objective, it is important that misperceptions be clarified. It is disingenuous on her part to blame Bhutan for the lack of progress in our bilateral talks when it is widely known that disruptions to the bilateral process resulted from the political instability in her country, which were accompanied by frequent changes of Government and positions on the issue. Bhutan for its part has always been committed to the bilateral process and has not deviated from the understandings and agreements reached between the two countries.

The issue is a highly complex one that does not lend itself to conventional solutions. The genesis of the problem lies in illegal immigration. The camps were

established without any screening procedures when only 304 people, claiming to be refugees from Bhutan, arrived in eastern Nepal. Screening procedures were put in place by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees only after two and a half years, and by then the number had reached its present proportion. In view of the complexity of the issue, the two Governments had agreed that the bilateral process was the only way to find a solution. In this regard, we appreciate the offer of the United States of America and other countries for third country resettlement, as it would help address that humanitarian problem.

While the Royal Government remains committed to the bilateral process, it has serious security concerns with Maoist infiltration of the camps and the formation of several radical groups, who have publicly stated their objective of destabilizing Bhutan and disrupting the country's first parliamentary elections next year.

In conclusion, I would like to once again convey my delegation's full support to the President and wish the General Assembly every success at it sixty-second session. Tashi delek.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Elvin Nimrod, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade, Legal Affairs, Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs of Grenada.

Mr. Nimrod (Grenada): I am honoured to join previous delegations in congratulating the President on his election as President of this Assembly at its sixty-second session. Let me assure him of Grenada's unconditional support as he guides our important and crucial deliberations towards a fruitful and tangible conclusion.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mrs. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, who laboured tirelessly during her presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-first session, and to her timely and productive initiatives. In addition, my delegation would like to renew its support to the Secretary-General in his endeavour to advance the agenda of the United Nations and to make it more effective.

In his opening remarks to this General Assembly the President identified five areas as our priorities: climate change, economic development, the Millennium Development Goals, terrorism and United Nations reform. Grenada salutes that vision in recognizing the critical issues facing our world today, and it is through this lens that I would like to project the views of my country.

On the question of climate change, we applaud the Secretary-General for convening the recently concluded High-level Event on Climate Change, and we are satisfied that this will provide the stimulus and momentum required for the forthcoming negotiations in Bali. Indeed, for this sixty-second session, my delegation welcomes the tremendous emphasis being placed on climate change and, based on the statements made thus far, we are heartened to note the overwhelming commitment to preparing a better world for our future generations.

The recently concluded event was not our first attempt. Climate change was also addressed in Rio de Janeiro, Barbados and Mauritius. It seems that we are blessed with a penchant for songs of praise in this multilateral temple of commitment and sacrifice. The chorus of our voices reverberates loudly in these halls of wisdom, only to sound a hollow note as we exit the archways of these chambers and backslide into reality. As in all of these conferences, the real challenge that we face is to convert what seems like a religious fervour into good deeds in the neighbourhood of our global village. As we preach, so too must we become converts. Let us move from resolutions to results.

As we head towards Bali, we must craft a negotiating table that extends well beyond the dimensions of the intergovernmental process. That table must have seats for the unborn generations, as well as seats for this generation wishing to taste the social and economic prosperity of a new world order.

Because of sea-level rise, we in the small island States face the spectre of environmental refugees and our people are already being displaced. For example, the Maldives with its 1,900 islands, that country has undertaken significant expenditure building sea defences and in creating safe zone resettlements for its people.

The low-lying islands and countries of the world deserve a far more robust and accountable response from the international community. In that regard, we welcome the investigation in the Maldives of the human dimensions of climate change.

As Grenada knows so well, the effects of climate change represent the most dangerous threat to the economic development, peace and security and

territorial existence of small island States. We therefore welcome the efforts of the British Mission here in New York, which has worked ceaselessly to raise awareness and understanding of the threat posed by climate change, echoing the very concerns that many small States and low-lying coastal nations have raised over the last 15 years.

In fact, one thing that has become painfully clear to Grenada is how easily — in the blink of an eye — an entire country can be flattened. In our case, it was the eye of Hurricane Ivan. Hurricanes and cyclones are appearing in unusual latitudes and with greater ferocity. They are appearing further south in the Atlantic, affecting islands like Grenada, and they are appearing further north in the Indian Ocean and hit the Seychelles for the first time in 50 years. Just this summer we have seen two category five hurricanes, Dean and Felix, make landfall in the Caribbean within two weeks of each other, causing loss of lives and hundreds of millions of dollars in damages.

In Grenada's case, the destruction was twice its gross domestic product. However, with the help of God, the resilience of the Grenadian people, the help from our Caribbean and international friends including the United States of America, and with the leadership of my Prime Minister, we continue our aspirations to build back better. In that regard, I would like to pay special tribute to the People's Republic of China, whose generous assistance and commitment to our development have been greatly appreciated by the Government and the people of Grenada. Because of their help, Grenada was able to host Cricket World Cup 2007 at our new stadium, which was financed and constructed by the People's Republic of China.

Despite all concerted efforts, climate change has led to a downward assessment of our sovereign credit rating and Grenada is now under the guidance of the International Monetary Fund. Grenada cannot borrow money on the international market to replant its nutmeg, to mend its coastal infrastructure, or to upgrade its tourism industry. As a result, we have imposed a reconstruction levy on our people, at a time when global energy and food prices are increasing. The economic burden of global warming is hitting the pockets of ordinary women and men in the streets of Grenada, the poor farmer, the hardworking teacher and the waiters and waitresses in our hotels. Those ordinary island citizens are paying the price for the lifestyles of the major emitters.

A new paradigm is needed within the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. Within that paradigm must lie an understanding that small island developing States have an environmental and economic vulnerability that warrants a new set of metrics, a new set of rules and a new level of support.

As we head towards a post-2012 agreement, we need aggressive mitigation targets. Those targets are critical for us, because sea temperature rise is already causing bleaching of the coastal reefs. Loss of those ecosystems has a harmful impact on fish stocks, one of our main sources of protein and foreign exchange.

The Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre has said that a further one degree temperature rise will lead to significant loss of tuna and dolphin stocks. And to compound the matter, in Mauritius and the Seychelles, tuna stocks are diving deeper seeking cooler waters. In recent years, the fish catch has dwindled and revenues have diminished. To alleviate those problems, more investment is now needed in new studies, as well as in fishing technologies, equipment and practices.

As we approach the Bali meeting, Grenada reiterates its position, articulated by the Alliance of Small Island States, that the viability and adaptability of the most vulnerable, such as small island developing States, must be the fundamental benchmark against which all negotiations are framed. In the efforts to mitigate climate change, no nation must be left behind. Let that be our guiding principle, if we are to make meaningful progress in Bali.

While these negotiations are ongoing, my country and many other islands and low-lying countries are taking all necessary steps to cushion the fallouts and dislocations. Adaptation funding and funding for economic development are almost indivisible.

Grenada calls for the urgent completion of the institutional arrangements for the Adaptation Fund, in a manner that guarantees that priority should be given to the needs of the small island developing States. On the question of the Global Environmental Facility, we welcome the energy, enthusiasm and flexibility of its new Chief Executive Officer. We are, however, disappointed with the implications of the Resource Allocation Framework. Nonetheless, we look forward to strengthening the working relationship with the Facility following reforms that make it more responsive to the needs of small island States.

Climate change, energy, economic development and the Millennium Development Goals are so tightly interwoven that over the long term, we cannot tease out any one thread without weakening the fabric of our common aspirations for prosperity and peace.

It is well known that women are the most affected by poverty and suffer the highest levels of marginalization. As the United Nations continues its study of the issue of gender architecture and the general advancement of women, Grenada sees the empowerment of women as being critical for our own development. We therefore urge other States to contribute to the many bodies of the United Nations that promote and seek to secure avenues for women in the development process. Let us contribute to their budgets and not to their demise; for even if only a few benefit, that sets the stage for others to follow. In our view, the advancement of women represents a most powerful force for social and economic progress. Investment in gender mainstreaming is an investment in social justice, economic diversity and political stability.

The United Nations must lead by example. Guided by the tenets of the Millennium Development Goals, Grenada is working assiduously to improve the status of women. Several years ago only a few women held high political or other public offices in Grenada, but today we are proud to report that approximately 50 per cent of the Cabinet of our executive branch is made up of women and that many others hold top positions within the public service.

The challenge facing the vulnerable States of the world can be resolved only if we ourselves transform our thinking and reform our methodologies. For that reason, we support the revitalization of the General Assembly. My delegation joins the call for the expansion of the membership of the Security Council in both categories to allow for a Council more representative of the 192 States and five regions which it represents. That way we can achieve much in assembling a stronger and more powerful Council which will be better able to fulfil its mandate in a fair, just and transparent manner.

Grenada, as small as it is, has the honour to highlight its humble but valuable contribution to the securing of stability in Haiti. This year Grenada has increased its deployment of police personnel to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. We encourage others to give whatever support they can, no matter how minute, to the efforts of international peacekeeping initiatives. We are, however, hopeful that very soon our unit and others like it will no longer be needed.

In closing, I must indicate that despite the challenges I have outlined relating to our economic viability and territorial integrity, we still have to pay close attention to terrorism and other threats to world peace and security. Grenada therefore remains steadfast in its commitment to the international community to fight terrorism in all its forms and to ensure that the seeds of that poisonous weed never take root on our shores. Grenada is convinced that a free and democratic world is our best hope and therefore pledges its full support towards the betterment of lives worldwide. I call on all nations, big and small, rich and poor, to contribute even more to that noble task.

We are all obviously singing from the same song sheet. Let us harmonize the sound of our voices to amplify action for the citizens of our world. It must echo triumphantly across the generations, so that when it is replayed with fidelity to our children and our grandchildren they will listen with dignity, and not with disdain.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Lisa Shoman, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize.

Ms. Shoman (Belize): For more than 20 years we have been talking about rising atmospheric temperatures, the depletion of the ozone layer, rising sea levels and the impending inundation of low-lying coastal areas. Now that the climate change debate has finally become the rage, those of us who see the change and worry about the inevitable must unfortunately still contend with entrenched special interests who, despite the overwhelming evidence now available, continue to argue otherwise.

We are focusing our general debate on climate change, and it is the hope of my delegation that this will lead to more decisive action by all Member States so that we can begin to make the changes we believe are necessary for us to reverse the trends which so far continue to lead us down a destructive path.

We already agree that negotiations on action to tackle climate change should be conducted within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change. We subscribe to the principle that each of us has a role to play. Those who are the largest polluters must reverse these trends. Those who are not among the largest polluters must take the necessary measures aimed at mitigation, as well as adaptation methods, to help in reversing those trends.

Developed countries must recognize the special needs of the most vulnerable, in order to support our efforts towards sustainable development and to assist us to make our communities more adaptable to change. We must develop the capacity to take action. We must adopt more sustainable practices. For that to occur we must take specific action to limit greenhouse gas emissions. It is not enough to say that we will reduce harmful emissions. We have been saying that since Rio; we must do it.

The European Union commitment on climate change is important politically, but we need to move beyond symbolism to action. Other developed countries and regions, as well as emerging economies, must take substantial steps towards mitigation and develop and share the technologies which result in low-carbon or no-carbon economies.

In Belize, the symbiosis between our ecology and our economy is evident. Agricultural production, fishing, mineral extraction and hydrocarbon exploration as well as tourism are all subject to the caprices of the climate. Must we also be subjected to an uneven playing field in the arena of international trade, which is fast reaching the crisis level? To mix metaphors, sometimes a rising tide can swamp vulnerable boats.

The international community must keep development in perspective in the current climate change debate, since, as has been said before, economic development better enables countries to tackle climate change. Our focus on the urgency of the current situation should not, however, detract from the equally urgent if not dire situation of the development agenda, resulting from complex factors including climate change and the failure of the international economic system to reinvent itself.

At the heart of the crisis is a fundamental distrust, and no place is this more evident than in the Doha Development Round. Doha doled out harsh consequences for developing countries, particularly those that are commodity and preference dependent. We ask the question: Is there is a serious commitment to the survival of the multilateral trading system? If the answer is no, we can expect to see even more bilateral and regional arrangements, resulting in a movement away from the idea that together we are better at solving our common problems.

The discussions on climate change and the larger development debate exhibit the need for an effective, legitimate multilateral system that is fair and balanced and that operates in a transparent and inclusive manner. Responsible leadership that adheres to the basic principles of justice and the rule of law is even more critical to achieving that system and maintaining its integrity.

It is in this spirit of respect for law and justice and of the desire for equity and for the preservation of human rights that we continue to struggle with the decision of this body to exclude any true debate over the inclusion of the right of the 23 million people of Taiwan to representation in this institution. The desire of the people of Taiwan is not only to take part in the deliberations of this institution but, indeed, to be engaged on the critical issues facing the international community. We remain steadfast in our support for their aspirations and will continue to advocate for their representation, as well as that of the Saharawi people, who lack a voice in our United Nations.

We continue to monitor the situation in the Middle East with great concern. The question of Palestine remains the crux of the conflicts in the region. In that regard, it is high time that we realized the vision of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace and security. We join those who expect that the international meeting to be held in the near future will yield results substantial enough to translate that vision into reality.

The United Nations remains the key institution to facilitate cooperation and build global solidarity to solve our pressing economic, social and political problems. Its effectiveness has been challenged. The United Nations and its Member States have responded to this challenge by embarking on a comprehensive reform process to overhaul the system and to ensure that it is better equipped to meet contemporary global demands.

We applaud reform that has been achieved in peacebuilding, human rights and humanitarian assistance and encourage the United Nations to monitor these developments for their effectiveness and

their compliance with their mandates and with the Charter of the United Nations. Belize continues to support comprehensive reform of the Security Council. In particular, we agree with other Member States which have called for a more results-oriented debate during the sixty-second session.

Building trust requires a return to basics. To advance development, we must return to the basic principle of equity. In international peace and security, we must return to the basic principles of the United Nations Charter and the rule of law.

In the matter of climate change, that greatest challenge to our civilization, we must look to science to make those arguments which will diminish the sceptics. And we must return to the basic principles enshrined in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Let us give meaning to the moment. Let us get to work.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ednan Karabaev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Karabaev (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, let me join others in congratulating Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I assure him that the delegation of Kyrgyzstan stands ready to cooperate with him. On behalf of my delegation I wish him every success in fulfilling his responsibilities.

I wish to pay tribute to Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa for her outstanding stewardship during the previous session of the General Assembly.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on his election to his high and responsible post and to wish him every success in his important work. I am confident that his vast experience and diplomatic skill will enable him to achieve all the goals of the United Nations.

It would no doubt be difficult to come to a common agreement about the date on which the new millennium began — whether it started with the tragedy of 2001 or harks back to 1991, when the structure of the world order changed. I believe that the proponents of either theory would agree that a new period has emerged: a time when the interdependence of States has become a vivid reality leading to greater vulnerability. Problems have become global, whereas globalization has become localized.

In the face of all these dilemmas, the United Nations unswervingly maintains its status as an organization whose core value is to promote the moral principles of solidarity. The formation of a global civil society and the recognition of universally accepted rights and freedoms under the auspices of the United Nations play a significant role in furthering the process of consolidation.

This clearly shows that society is capable of refraining from war and solving its problems by using its peacekeeping potential. Thoughtfully building the future is not possible without reviewing and continuing strategic planning of socio-economic development. Fifteen years ago, one of the most noteworthy of United Nations conferences took place at Rio de Janeiro. There, the concept of sustainable development was defined as a new tenet for humankind. The main purpose was to create a new mechanism enabling us to resolve existing social tensions and to prevent future ones through cooperation among States and the formation of a global civil society.

The relationship between the State and the society develops differently in each country. The Kyrgyz Republic has come a long way in affirming democratic values, conducting constitutional reform and fiscal decentralization. All this has been reflected in the national development strategy approved by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Mr. Kurmanbek Bakiev. The aim of that document is to achieve sustainable development by 2010; it is based on the principles of self-fulfilment and human security, which are the basic source of positive change in the sphere of human development.

At the same time, we are well aware that long-term sustainable development depends on the stability of human relationships based on an understanding of how to use existing resources for social and economic development today and of what we must leave for future generations.

Seven years ago, the General Assembly adopted the Millennium Development Goals, thereby defining our objectives for the future and the conditions needed to achieve them. Attainment of the eight Goals and tackling of the 15 challenges will serve as a basis both

for our global initiative and for realizing the potential of regional development.

Nevertheless, level of development varies from region to region. This is particularly relevant for mountainous regions, which require a different strategy for sustainable development which takes into account each area's specific potential in natural resources. In addition to defining the ecological parameters, it is necessary to define the economic and geographic peculiarities of mountainous regions that call for a special system of management which would give priority to local self-governance. Despite their significant resource potential, mountainous territories need to address as a priority problems related to living standards and quality of life. In that regard, the Kyrgyz Republic believes that a second Global Mountain Summit should be convened, at which we could formulate a definitive sustainable policy for mountainous regions, along with relevant norms of international law.

Even what is seemingly the most insignificant social inequality can destroy the social integrity of humankind. Similarly, equal protection of rights and freedoms and the adoption of universal values of respect for human life enable us to fulfil the principles of the Seville Statement Violence, which defines war as a product of human culture.

The primary source of conflict is, in fact, lack of social responsibility. The development strategy of every single country should establish social responsibility as a basic characteristic for elaborating approaches to regional and global coordination, thus improving the environment and reducing energy shortages. Regional parameters of responsibility will then create a new type of society, which will be no longer a society at risk, but rather a society of security.

I have no doubt that all of today's participants, as well as all countries that accepted the MDGs as a basis for their national development, are striving to establish social peace and social equality, but the establishment of a socially-oriented world order requires the strengthening of mechanisms to promote the adoption of decisions at the highest level. It is necessary that such mechanisms include both the monitoring of joint efforts and parameters of progress achieved in the framework of the most effective implementation of the MDGs. The initiative of the Kyrgyz President to proclaim 20 February a world day of social justice would serve as such a mechanism. We kindly request the General Assembly to consider adopting a resolution to that effect at the current session.

The establishment of social justice has been a dream of humankind for many millennia. There was a time when some were burned at the stake for entertaining such dreams or attempting to establish a community of social justice. At one time, dictatorship and authoritarianism prospered under the pretext of a call to social justice. That happened because of a disparity between the proclaimed elevated goals and the means of their achievement.

In the third millennium, the world's nations have defined development goals in the framework of a united society. The means to achieve those goals must correspond to a high level of civic awareness of the potential of peacekeeping. We already have the grounds for a constructive dialogue defining the dynamics of peacekeeping for humankind's development. The United Nations has been a foundation of such dialogue for several decades.

Allow me from this rostrum to confirm the adherence of the Kyrgyz Republic to the goals and purposes of the United Nations to maintain peace, security and a prosperous life for all the nations of the Earth.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Charles Savarin, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade, Labour and the Public Service of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

Mr. Savarin (Dominica): Let me at the outset congratulate Mr. Kerim on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session and assure him of the cooperation of the Dominica delegation throughout this session. I commend his predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her leadership during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his election. I wish him a long and successful tenure, and hope that under his leadership the United Nations will give greater attention to the plight of the world's small island developing States, which are among the most vulnerable to climate change, natural disasters and a rise in sea levels.

In the interdependent world which we live in today, the promotion of the fundamental values of

peace, democracy, human rights and development depends on strong multilateral institutions. Dominica believes that it is only a strong United Nations, sensitive to the variable geometry of its own complex construction, that can serve as the foundation of our shared ambitions for effective multilateralism and a rules-based international order.

The experience of the past decade has taught us one important lesson: global challenges require global responses, and those challenges can receive the appropriate responses only through the framework of multilateral action. The United Nations is the undisputed centre for multilateralism, and we must all demonstrate unwavering commitment to vesting in the United Nations the authority and to offering it the space to undertake effective interventions in the interest of the preservation of human life, human rights, peace, justice, democracy and the rule of law.

More than ever, we need a United Nations which is not only guided by the principles that oversaw its creation, but capable of adapting to the growing challenges of today's globalized world. We need an effective United Nations that will place the highest priority on development, while having the capacity to respond to the various crises that threaten international peace and security.

The work of the international community in poverty alleviation must be accelerated as the chasm between the rich and the poor continues to widen. In that connection, the importance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 is critical. We must therefore rededicate ourselves to the implementation of the actions called for in the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty and in relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, including those related to the right to development, the alleviation of burdensome debt, and fair and equitable trading rules.

Climate change is the most pressing environmental problem humankind has ever faced. It seriously threatens human security and will undermine our ability to achieve the MDGs. Unless there is a global and collective response, this planet will become unlivable for most of us.

Small island developing States are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, even though they contribute the least to emissions of greenhouse gases. Sea-level rise threatens the territorial existence of small island developing States, and low-lying islands in the Indian Ocean, the Pacific and the Caribbean may simply disappear in the next 30 years or less as the melting of ice caps and mountain glaciers on all continents becomes the new reality of unchecked climate change. The disappearance of beaches and coastal tourism plants and the loss of coastal communication infrastructure would devastate the tourism economy of most island States. Other regions are also beginning to experience the effects of those climatic changes, with persistent conditions of drought followed by devastating flooding.

Rising sea temperature is causing death and the bleaching of coral reefs, which in turn are impacting negatively on fish stocks, the major protein source of island States. It is estimated that a one-degree increase in sea temperature over pre-industrial levels will lead to significant loss of tuna and dolphin stocks for a large number of island States.

Rising sea temperature also provides a fertile ground for the development of tropical storms and hurricanes, which affect the Caribbean region every year. Climate change is contributing to the frequency and severity of those storms. We are currently in the midst of the 2007 hurricane season and, over a two-week period in the month of August, the Caribbean region suffered the onslaught of two category-5 hurricanes, Dean and Felix. Those storms seriously affected Dominica, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint Lucia, Jamaica, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua and Mexico. We are only half-way through this hurricane season, which is forecast to have seven category-5 hurricanes. It may very well be that the worst is yet to come.

My own country, Dominica, was severely battered by Hurricane Dean, the third-worst hurricane to make landfall in the Caribbean since 1850. After 15 hours of buffeting by winds of 110 miles per hour and continuous rainfall, our agricultural economy was destroyed, our infrastructure devastated by swollen rivers and numerous landslides, and our housing stock seriously affected. We appreciate greatly the solidarity of a number of countries, regional and extra-regional, and the generous support they provided in the immediate aftermath, but now comes the serious challenge of reconstruction, which is estimated to cost over a $100 million.

The high-level event on climate change helped to underscore that doing nothing about climate change will have enormous negative implications for all countries, and more particularly for the least developed countries and small island developing States. The pace of climate change negotiations is disconcertingly slow because it is not adequately responsive to the urgency dictated by science.

We urge all the nations of the world to come to Bali in December prepared to advance the multilateral negotiations. A demonstration of collective political will and commitment to determined action will be critical if we are to reach agreement on a fair, effective, flexible and inclusive climate regime under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol. Developed countries and the more advanced developing countries must make a greater effort to do more and to be considerate of the emergency situation facing the small island States.

We continue to stress that the vulnerable situation of the small island developing States must be addressed through the vigorous implementation of the actions called for in the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

We call for the full implementation of the mandates contained in the Millennium Declaration, in particular the commitments to development and poverty eradication, the protection of the common environment, and the realization of human rights, democracy and good governance. As a follow-up to the reform commitments emanating from the 2005 Summit, we welcome the reports of the High-level Panel and of the Secretary-General on system-wide coherence, and we hope for the strengthened capacity of the United Nations in development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.

The adoption of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the General Assembly was an important achievement. It will be meaningless, however, if we do not address its full implementation. Small States like Dominica and the rest of the States members of the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States must be assisted to meet the various obligations required by the implementation of the counter-terrorism conventions.

As a country with an indigenous Kalinago population, Dominica is proud to have played a role in the negotiation process that led to the recent adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and we call on those Member States that have not yet done so to embrace the Declaration.

Dominica applauds the African Union for its unwavering efforts towards the maintenance of peace and security on the African continent, and we are supportive of the long-term vision of an African peace and security architecture. In that context, Dominica welcomes the creation of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, which we hope will contribute to the political resolution of the conflict there and bring to an end its tragic humanitarian consequences in the Sudan and the neighbouring States.

In our region, we welcome the continuing engagement of the United Nations and the Organization of American States in Haiti. We urge the United Nations to make the commitment to going beyond the current engagement through the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to a longer-term engagement that will bring sustainable economic stability and development to Haiti. We appreciate the important role of Brazil and the other Member States that are participating in MINUSTAH, but we must be careful not to see those interventions as the emergency response of an international fire brigade quickly extinguishing political conflagrations and remaining only long enough to dampen the embers of renewed conflict.

Haiti's problems stem from underdevelopment and extensive periods of dictatorship. It is in democracy and development, therefore, that the solutions for Haiti lie. A stable and prosperous Haiti will significantly strengthen the Caribbean Community and contribute meaningfully to the process of deepening regional integration and the attendant march towards the Caribbean single market and economy.

Recent violent upheavals in Myanmar are not encouraging for the hoped-for resolution of the long-standing difficulties afflicting that country in its transition to democracy. We urge influential countries in South-East Asia that have friendly relations with the military regime in Rangoon to use their good offices in support of the United Nations effort to bring about a political solution and national reconciliation among all concerned parties.

The continued presence of the Republic of France, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of America in the Caribbean should provide an opportunity for the strategic engagement of those metropoles, Canada and Spain with the independent Caribbean States to create in the Caribbean a zone of peace, security and prosperity, complementing the invaluable development assistance of the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Cuba, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Japan and the European Union.

I wish to underscore the vital importance of a fair global trading system as the only way for small States to survive in this globalized world. We do not want to depend on fast-disappearing development assistance. We want to have the assurance that we will be able to trade the goods and services we produce on terms and conditions that will enable us to build our economies and to provide employment for our citizens. That is why we continue to call for the earliest possible conclusion of the Doha Development Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO). We urge the major trading nations to demonstrate a spirit of compromise and constructiveness, backed by a genuine will to commit to a balanced agreement that embraces the principle of special and differential treatment for small island developing States and places development at the centre of any final agreement.

Dominica has made important progress in its quest to adapt to the challenges of trade liberalization and its attendant preference erosion. Those changing terms of trade have progressively devastated our primary source of foreign exchange earnings — the export of bananas. That persistent assault on our banana exports to the European Union through unrelenting recourse to the WTO dispute settlement body has impacted negatively on our overall economy. As a result, we have had to undergo a structural adjustment programme and undertake stringent fiscal measures that have required sacrifices by the population as a whole in order to stabilize the deteriorating fiscal and economic position. We have turned the corner and returned to a period of sustained economic growth, and are moving steadily to the diversification of our economy. The impact of Hurricane Dean so soon afterwards will therefore be doubly devastating.

We are working towards a new energy regime that will significantly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels for our energy needs and slow the haemorrhaging of scarce foreign exchange earnings to meet the ever-rising cost of petroleum products. We plan to increase our current 40-per cent renewable energy generation from hydropower through initiatives for geothermal energy development and further expansion of hydropower. We will need the continuing partnership of the development partners to remain on that path towards successful economic transformation.

May I call on the United Nations once more to rededicate itself to making development the highest priority of this body. Together, the developed countries and the developing countries must work in a cooperative manner to address the challenges of climate change and sustainable development. We can work together to defeat poverty and underdevelopment and to give hope and dignity to all peoples. To achieve that, we must implement the decisions that we take here in this General Assembly every year. The time for action is now.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Natanaera Kirata, Minister of Public Works and Utilities of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Kirata (Kiribati): I bring warm greetings from my Government and the people of the Republic of Kiribati, on whose behalf I am honoured and privileged to address this important gathering this afternoon.

Allow me to join preceding speakers in offering my sincere congratulations to Mr. Kerim on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I am confident that with his wisdom, experience and diplomatic skill, he will steer the course of this Assembly to a successful conclusion. Let me assure him that Kiribati pledges its full support to him in the performance of his challenging task.

I take this opportunity to also extend my appreciation to his predecessor for the exemplary way in which she guided the proceedings of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

I wish to commend as well the Secretary-General and members of his team in the Secretariat for their perseverance and relentless efforts in pursuit of the goals of the United Nations. In particular, I congratulate the Secretary-General on his sterling leadership of this Organization since taking over his top and challenging job at the beginning of this year.

Our world is confronted more than ever with a number of serious threats and major challenges. Every year, we all come together from different parts of the world to this beautiful city of New York with our hopes of finding practical and workable solutions to those challenges. Indeed, situations in some regions of the world show no sign of improvement and are further confronted by crises that have proven difficult to settle. Those challenges affect us each as individual countries, small and big, rich and poor, developing and developed. In a world characterized by globalization and interdependence, the need for the human family to undertake constructive and sustained cooperation has become more urgent.

With the growing complexity and uncertainty of events in this world of ours, especially in the context of globalization and with the emergence of new challenges to peace and security, the fulfilment of the role of the United Nations remains critical. Kiribati remains committed to supporting the reform of the United Nations.

We continue to believe that the reform of this Organization is in the best interests of humanity, and we would like to see the reform processes move forward and be concluded as early as practicable in order for the Organization to be able to respond effectively to today's challenges to global peace, security and economic and social progress.

Seeking peace and economic development represents the common wish of all nations. Without global peace there can be little positive development in our countries. Kiribati is committed, within its resource and capacity constraints, to working closely with other like-minded countries in pursuit of world peace and stability, economic development and progress of mankind. As the only universal multilateral international organization, the United Nations remains the best forum for allowing all States to come together to resolve problems of a global character, regardless of their size or wealth.

States Members of the United Nations are all too aware that globalization has brought us all to a point at which everything is interconnected and the well-being of almost every citizen is affected by global developments. Events that happen in one part of the world have a direct bearing on the rest of the world.

Sometimes however, we are all affected and involved in a much more substantial way. Like other least developed countries and small island developing States, Kiribati has so many constraints. Our very remoteness from world market centres, narrow economic base and high population growth rates are factors that we must contend with. The continuing sharp increase in world oil prices and our total reliance on imported oil and fossil fuel has already put a lot of pressure on our economy. Our options for containing the adverse impact of increasing world oil prices are very limited. We must also contend with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and tuberculosis, among others, which require the diversion of the already meagre resources we have at our disposal to finance our development.

Those complex economic situations of ours will continue to undermine our efforts and determination to realize the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals. In order to be able to realize our aspirations to attaining sustainable economic development and to sharing the benefits of globalization, Kiribati would like to call on the international community to look at a new global strategy that would create an enabling economic environment for the most disadvantaged States Members of this noble institution, such as my own.

Even with those complex economic development challenges, we are forced to operate in an environment of uncertainty. I say "uncertainty" as our very survival as a nation and as a people with a distinct culture and way of life is at great risk, as we are being threatened by global warming and sea-level rise.

Our islands are widely dispersed and small; most rise barely over 0.2 metres above mean sea level. For countries such as Kiribati, global warming and sea-level rise are critical security concerns. Those concerns are ones that we, as individual countries and as members of this collective body, need to continue to work together to address.

We will continue to call on the international community to agree on a unified global response to those environment issues. We will also continue to work with like-minded countries in pushing the case for a unified global response to those issues. As a small country, Kiribati places great confidence on the international community for its survival, and we hope that our repeated appeals to this body to address that critical issue will receive stronger political support and commitment this time. There is no more time to debate

the issue, as climate change is now a fact of life. It is now time to put words into action so that this living planet is protected from complete destruction and preserved for use by our many generations to come.

We wish to commend the Secretary-General for his initiative in calling the high-level event on climate change on 24 September this year. That in itself means a lot to those who are now living under the cloud of desperation, fear and uncertainty. We remain confident that further meaningful actions will follow and that consensus will soon be achieved on finding a global solution to climate change before it is too late.

Terrorism is an ongoing concern that affects all countries large and small. Kiribati condemns terrorism in all its various forms and manifestations and will continue to support the global fight against terrorism.

This time last year, Kiribati joined other States Members of the United Nations in expressing our disappointment over the continued neglect and rejection of the desire of the 23 million people of Taiwan to join this Organization. It is further saddening to note that Taiwan's request for admission this year was again not given a fair opportunity to be heard by the General Assembly.

With a population of 23 million, giving it the forty-seventh largest population in the world, Taiwan has continued to respect and abide by the United Nations Charter based on the principles of democracy, mutual respect and understanding. We feel that Taiwan and its 23 million people deserve justice from this noble institution. It is Kiribati's fervent hope that Taiwan will one day be given the nod to assume its rightful place in this highly respected Organization.

Let us all work together to make this world a better place — a place where citizens of all of our nations can live together in harmony, peace, security and prosperity for many years to come.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hussein Elabe Fahiye, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Somali Republic.

Mr. Fahiye (Somalia): It is indeed an honour for me to extend to Mr. Kerim the sincere congratulations of the Government of Somalia upon his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. His tenure comes at a crucial period for the international community as tensions and instability have surfaced and the United Nations has also embarked on a series of world-changing reforms. My delegation is confident that he will rise to the challenges and steer this body competently during the sixty-second session.

Fitting tribute is also due to his predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her sterling guidance and exemplary way of steering the proceedings of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly during some of the most trying times for the United Nations.

Permit me also to express on behalf of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia my sincere felicitations to the new Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who has had a distinguished career in international diplomacy and who brings that extensive experience to the United Nations. Those skills will be crucial in his new assignment. We are confident that he will be a beacon of hope in keeping the United Nations ideal alive during the years ahead.

May I also take this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro on her appointment to the High Office of Deputy Secretary-General.

The President returned to the Chair.

One of the major principles of the United Nations Charter is to maintain peace and security, and to that end to take effective measures for the prevention and removal of breaches to world peace and security. It is in that conviction that I appear before this body to underscore the concerns of the Federal Government of Somalia on political and security matters related to the roles that should be assumed by the international community.

Regrettably, we feel that our major efforts in nation-building and State-institution development have met with an unreceptive response and reticence of an inexplicable nature. Collective action by this world body has been more consistent and vigorous, until very recently, in coming to the rescue of nations in dire need of help. A case in point concerning that incomprehensible attitude is the long-delayed adoption of a resolution on the timely deployment of a peacekeeping mission in Somalia. If that stand continues, it will reveal only a lack of commitment and indirect acquiescence to prolonging the agony of the Somali people. We call upon the United Nations to come out without delay in support of the deployment of the multinational forces.

The Transitional Federal Government of Somalia has diligently embarked on implementing the tasks mandated by our Charter before the end of the transitional period in 2009. Those include, among other things, securing democratic transformation, putting in place permanent constitutional legality, establishing a multi-party democratic society, and setting up regional autonomous administrations. The federal institutions in charge of that arduous task are working hard to provide the nation with a federal constitution that upholds those fundamental obligations, thus signalling a new era of tranquillity for the Somali people.

The efforts of the Federal Government culminated in the convening of a peace and national reconciliation conference in Somalia this year, indicating that national consciousness is regenerating within our society and a self-healing process has begun.

Despite disruptive intimidations by terrorist elements that tried to hijack the proceedings, the conference came to a successful conclusion. Representatives of all walks of life in the Somali community attended the conference and dealt with issues of concern in every aspect. In that regard, we pay special tribute to the helping hand of the Ethiopian forces and the Uganda-led African Union Mission in Somalia, which effectively dealt with the terrorists, who are gradually fading away.

Here, I wish to underscore that peace, security and the well-being and prosperity of individuals and nations alike are at stake in the fight against terrorism. It is our view that the only viable response to terrorism is a collective response of all nations, and it is for that reason that the United Nations system has a pivotal role to play and vital contributions to make in many aspects of counter-terrorism, from promoting the rule of law and effective criminal justice systems to ensuring that countries have the means to counter terrorism. No other institution has the means to unify nations in the fight against that evil, and there is no better venue for nations to forge their protective measures.

Our efforts aimed at nation-building, restoring peace and stability, conflict resolution, reconstruction and rehabilitation cannot have the expected impact unless the required funding resources and the needed equipment and supplies are made available as the days of institutional disharmony are replaced by an immense aspiration to rebuild the country. We therefore reiterate our repeated calls for a pledging conference, and appeal to the donor community to show serious commitment to organizing and convening an international donor conference, in coordination with the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia.

Another area that cries out for speedy action is the humanitarian needs in Somalia. As members are all aware, the protracted civil war and persistent fragmented conflicts over the past two decades have been exacerbated by natural disasters that have not only devastated public and private institutions, but have also torn the socio-economic fabric of society and contributed to grave humanitarian crises. We appeal to the world community to make generous contributions and to work closely with the Somali authorities to ensure that humanitarian access is provided to the most vulnerable populations. Meeting those humanitarian needs will ultimately provide a strong foundation from which recovery, reconstruction and development can emerge in the future.

This historical moment requires bold initiatives on the part of the President of the General Assembly, who, in tandem with the Secretary-General, is called upon to provide the vision and strength of conviction necessary to carry the United Nations forward to face the myriad challenges to the Organization. We are confident that, by working together closely, we can and shall meet the challenges ahead.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gonzalo Gutiérrez Reinel, Deputy Minister and Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Gutiérrez Reinel (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): For Peru, Sir, your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session is a guarantee of experience and exceptional work. I am convinced that your performance will strengthen the principles of dialogue and coordination that guide the efforts of the United Nations to attain realistic commitments that contribute to well-being in the daily life of humankind.

On 15 August, an earthquake occurred in the city of Pisco, seriously impacting the southern populations of Peru, claiming priceless human lives and causing great material damage. The Peruvian people deeply appreciates the immediate and generous response of the international community, as well as the speedy action of the United Nations Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Office's support showed that united action can make a difference in a crisis situation and contributed to the Government's activities in attending to the urgent needs of the victims. Our sincere recognition goes to the cooperation received, which is now being channelled by my country's Fund for Southern Reconstruction.

The stabilization and growth of the Peruvian economy over the past 76 months have generated national and international confidence and expectation. We are convinced that the investment and participation of our productive forces will allow us to maintain continuous growth and to exploit the opportunity to enhance a model and national project of social tranquillity and development.

In the first year of his Government, President of the Republic Alan García has laid the foundations for greater dynamic growth in the country. We must now consolidate and give practical and positive content to the democracy, governance and economic stabilization of the country in order to allow the growth indices to generate national confidence and participation that can be converted into transparency, equity, justice and social peace.

The struggle against poverty and inequity is the most formidable current challenge to the national and foreign policies of Peru. In the conviction that the dignity of human beings and their welfare are at the core of governmental management, and that economic indicators should be based on the well-being of our population without distinction, the Government of Peru has redefined its social policy through a concept of productive inclusion, access to education and technological innovations, territorial institutional development and support for the population. To that end, we have begun implementing a national strategy of rural development and a national strategy of food security to address chronic child malnutrition. Important road infrastructure works will complement the incorporation of the Peruvian Andes and Amazonia into the development of the country.

Towards the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals, Peru has set itself the concrete goal of reducing the current level of poverty from 50 per cent to 30 per cent by 2011. Chronic malnutrition will be reduced from 25 per cent to 16 per cent, and the provision of potable water and electricity will be extended to 90 per cent of citizens. Likewise, we plan to eradicate illiteracy, reduce employment in the informal sector from 53 per cent to 35 per cent, create 1.5 million jobs, and reduce the external debt from 24 per cent to 13 per cent of the gross domestic product.

The Government's new direction in State action is focused on decentralization. The strategic decentralization plan goes beyond the mere transfer of resources or the execution of public works in the interior of the country. The regions can now coordinate their own development plan, efficiently distribute more than 80 per cent of the national budget, interlink and gradually integrate Peru as a whole, and promote the better distribution of the population and income through a process of national institutionalization that supports optimal care of the environment.

Peru has become one of the emerging countries of the region thanks to the continuous growth of its economy over the past eight years. Its strategic location in the South American Pacific, the full force of a modern legal framework that encourages investment and exports, the diversity of its natural resources, its growing diversification in the global markets, and its political and macroeconomic stability are factors that ensure a development process of genuine social inclusion.

Much remains to do. In the face of the uncertainty of the Doha Round negotiations and a cautious evaluation of the effective possibilities of integration in the Andean subregion and Latin America, Peru is striving to conclude free trade treaties with its major commercial partners that will complement regional and subregional integration schemes and multilateral trade negotiations. In the Andean Community — comprised of Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia — Peru has an up-to-date free-trade zone. Likewise, Peru has entered into free-trade treaties with Chile and the United States, and is negotiating similar instruments with Canada and Mexico. Negotiations with the Central American countries are scheduled to begin shortly. We have finished negotiating a free-trade agreement with Singapore, negotiations with Thailand have reached an "early harvest" agreement, and we have begun to negotiate a free-trade agreement with the People's Republic of China. Likewise, the negotiation of an agreement of association between the Andean Community and the European Union has begun. Our priorities are now to pursue negotiations with Korea, Japan, India, Russia, Australia and New Zealand.

Our objectives are clear: to ensure access to the markets of our main commercial partners; to establish fair and predictable commercial rules and regulations that complement the standards of the World Trade Organization; to diversify the markets for our exports of goods and services; and to attract investment and technologies to modernize our productive structure, reduce the technology gap, and modernize Peru's physical infrastructure in order to increase its competitiveness.

Following on the results of a regressive utopian experiment in Latin America, we are convinced that Peru's model of integration into the global economy, while consolidating regional economic expansion, will allow us to ensure the participation of the large majority of our people in the system's benefits, with concrete improvements in their daily lives. It will thereby contribute to the people's sense of belonging to their social institutions and of full citizenship, as well as to their perception of themselves as agents of social-economic change and to the consolidation of the democratic system.

In the framework of such integration, my country is also assuming growing international responsibilities. In our efforts to foment dialogue, we are deeply honoured to be able to organize a summit of heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean and the European Union, as well as the summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum, both of which will take place in Peru in 2008.

Formidable technological advances, especially in the information field; the emergence of new powers; energy insecurity; climate change; growing inequity and poverty; and new challenges to international security characterize a changing and ever-more complex international scene to which States and international institutions must adapt. Global society is interlinked through productive processes, trade, financial flows, the digital telecommunications revolution, and so on.

In this complicated scenario, Peru is participating in the Security Council and in peacekeeping operations. The Peruvian armed forces are present in the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Haiti.

Peru attaches special importance to cooperation with Haiti, having assumed in January the coordination of the Group of Friends of Haiti in the Security Council. In that regard, we support the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for a year, as well as the gradual reorientation of its work to promote development, in support of its multidisciplinary and multidimensional work. At present, we are contributing a contingent of Peruvian military officers, which we expect to be able to complement shortly with an engineering corps.

Our permanent representation in New York has presented a draft resolution that, inter alia, reaffirms the urgent call to fulfil the contribution pledges, pursuant to the priorities presented by the Haitian Government, especially for cooperation projects to eradicate poverty, improve basic health services and strengthen national institutions. We expect the draft resolution to enjoy consensus in the Security Council so that the international contribution to Haiti can continue.

Last May, Peru, with the cooperation of Norway and the United Nations Development Programme, organized the Lima Conference on Cluster Munitions, assuming a lead regional role in the endorsement of the Oslo Process. At the Conference, Peru presented to the 69 delegations of the participating countries a proposal to secure a declaration of the Latin-American region as a zone free of cluster munitions, which have indiscriminate effects on civilians. Our initiative already enjoys the support of many countries of our region.

Peru is also committed to effectively implementing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Peru is in the final stages of preparing a national plan of action against anti-personnel mines with a view to completing the demining process along our northern frontier, in cooperation with the brotherly country of Ecuador.

Moreover, Peru is firmly committed to efforts to attain complete disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well as their delivery systems, which constitute a threat to international peace and security. In that respect, we support the strengthening and universalization of the relevant binding multilateral agreements. In that context, Peru organized a regional seminar on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in November 2006, in which most countries of the region participated.

The General Assembly is the forum in which the middle-income countries can efficiently contribute to identifying imaginative responses to conflicts and new threats. That is why we resolutely support reform that will strengthen the Assembly and ensure its ability to adapt to change and to the most urgent needs on the international agenda. In order to reinforce the Assembly's legitimacy, we need to sharpen procedures and reduce its agenda. An equal priority is to carry out more effective action against violations of human rights. Security Council reform is needed urgently to make the Council a more efficient, transparent, legitimate and representative body with better working methods. On the Other hand, we also want to highlight the validity of the Economic and Social Council, an essential instrument for promoting greater effectiveness in the coordination of development strategies, as well as assistance in emergencies.

International reality presents many challenges to the universal system for promoting and protecting human rights. There is still a dichotomy between security and individual rights, with a backdrop marked by the poverty and the inequality in which the great majority around the world live and which affect human dignity. The new Human Rights Council and the system integrated into it ought to help in the response to these challenges.

Discussion over the last few days in this Organization shows that climate change is a world problem that requires a collective response from the international community in a framework of a multilateral and worldwide commitment. Through sustainable forest management, Peru has contributed to the global commitment by reducing emissions caused by deforestation. We have also made headway in implementing our National Strategy on Climate Change by strengthening national capacities to maximize human and financial resources. The size of the problem requires an agreement with goals for the emission of greenhouse gases more ambitious than those agreed in the first stage. Peru has great expectations for the next meeting in Bali, and we will work to ensure a common platform that will allow us to very soon begin negotiations to define the new international regime that we hope will be concluded in 2009.

The official launching of the International Year of the Potato will take place at Headquarters on 19 October. This celebration is especially important for my country because the potato has its origin in Peru, and it is the country with the greatest genetic diversity of this product. The cultivation of the potato was developed in ancient times by civilizations that gave rise to the Peru of today and is one of the great contributions to the world's diet. Peru has proclaimed 2008 as the National Year of the Potato and has developed a calendar of multisectoral activities for outreach and research that will be a positive contribution to the work programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization.

I shall conclude by noting that Peru participates actively to ensure and strengthen the United Nations Charter principles and objectives of peace, peaceful coexistence and development, especially in the Security Council and the Human Rights Council. In accordance with this commitment, Peru will continue to promote dialogue and coordination among peoples of the world. It has put forward its candidature for the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, bodies within the United Nations system where we hope to achieve the support of all members of the Assembly in order to contribute to working towards a safer, more equitable world where development can reach the large majority of populations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yannis Valinakis, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the of the Hellenic Republic.

Mr. Valinakis (Greece) (*spoke in French*): The great challenges and problems, both global and regional, call for urgent and coherent responses. The responsibilities and the role of the United Nations in raising awareness and in providing unity of direction are now greater and more important. That is exactly why compliance with United Nations resolutions should be a top priority for all, including those are elected to represent the Organization and its agencies.

I should like to congratulate Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa — who was only the third woman in the history of the United Nations to occupy the post of President of this Assembly — on her efforts to promote the purpose and principles for which our Organization was founded.

I should also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts to safeguard international peace and security and for his

keeping alive the authority and role of the Organization in this area.

Greece fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Prime Minister of Portugal on behalf of the European Union. However, we would like to add a few points about the major issues on our agenda for the coming period.

(*spoke in English*)

The end of the Cold War ushered in a new era in international relations in which the threat of military confrontation between the two power blocs dissipated. However, the world community still faces violent internal conflicts, civil wars, genocide and other large-scale atrocities that cause immense destruction and suffering to millions of people.

And yet, conflicts within and between States are not the only threat to international peace and security. New threats and challenges are emerging. Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a serious challenge. Organized crime and human trafficking constitute another threat that can have destabilizing effects and fuel civil wars. Extreme poverty in many parts of the world, failing States, large-scale humanitarian disasters, deadly infectious diseases and environmental degradation and catastrophes have devastating consequences.

We applaud the Secretary-General's initiative to hold a high-level event last week to deal with climate change, environmental issues being potentially the greatest threat to our societies. I hope that a global, sustained and comprehensive approach emerges soon to help save our planet, our future, our children's future.

Controlling and coping with climate change is one of the greatest environmental and development challenges. Without swift action to face the problems arising from these challenges, we all risk paying a high and bitter price. We should proceed in a timely manner, through a step-by-step approach, building on national as well as international capacities in order to address the causes, mitigate the effects and create synergies that will allow for specific and measurable results in the near future. A clear indication of the importance Greece attaches to the environment is the fact that the Greek chairmanship of the Human Security Network has decided to focus on climate change and human security.

This summer my country suffered enormously from devastating wildfires. May I take this opportunity, while addressing the international community, to express our deep gratitude and thanks to all those countries and friends who have extended to us their invaluable support, help and assistance.

Working for peace is not an easy task. The pursuit of international peace and stability, if it is to be successful, means that threats have to be addressed in a comprehensive way and that many conditions have to be met. Unresolved conflicts have to be energetically confronted, while, at the same time, we have to deal with situations of deep-seated injustice, inequality, ongoing violence, social exclusion, extreme poverty, famine, illiteracy and cultural misunderstanding.

In addressing the deep-rooted structural problems that fuel conflicts, peacebuilding must bridge security and development. Good governance, the rule of law, strong democratic institutions, respect for human rights and development assistance are critical components in reducing today's conflicts.

Terrorism is undeniably one of the most serious threats to peace and security, menacing the very foundation of our democratic societies, and actions to combat this threat should be in conformity with international human rights standards and fundamental freedoms. The adoption of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the General Assembly was a major accomplishment, and its full implementation should be an absolute priority for Member States. In this respect, I would like to emphasize the importance that my country attaches to the conclusion of ongoing negotiations for the elaboration of a comprehensive convention against international terrorism; it would be a valuable addition to the counter-terrorism legal framework.

In the face of all the threats and challenges that transcend State borders, we need a more comprehensive concept of collective security, one based on respect and justice as requirements for peace and solidarity as a condition for security, and entailing a commitment from all to promote sustainable development. But above all, we need a commitment to collective political action requiring the strengthening of the United Nations.

The early, comprehensive and coherent prevention of conflicts lies at the heart of the United Nations mandate for the maintenance of international

peace and security. Integrated and long-term strategies to address the root causes of conflict are necessary. The United Nations should therefore be strengthened in its managing, resolving and preventing conflicts and their recurrence. International regional organizations should also be effective in this regard, and international treaties should be respected.

The United Nations was created on the basis of the resolve of all States that collective action was the only basis for taking measures to address our common global problems. We only have common values enshrined in the United Nations Charter that guide our efforts and give us direction to unite around what is just and right — freedom, democracy, human rights, equality, peaceful resolution of conflicts, respect, multiculturalism, tolerance and open societies, and dialogue among neighbours, nations, religions and cultures. Greece's foreign and security policy is based precisely on these principles and values. We are committed to the peaceful settlement of disputes, the upholding of international law, including international humanitarian law, and promoting good neighbourly relations.

I deeply regret to note that, 33 years after the Turkish invasion in 1974, the Republic of Cyprus remains a divided island. Turkey continues to occupy part of a United Nations and European Union (EU) Member State with over 40,000 troops, violating United Nations resolutions and international law. Our steadfast objective remains the withdrawal of all occupation troops and the reunification of the island, in the context of a bizonal, bicommunal federation. To this end, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the EU principles and values provide a clear framework for a comprehensive settlement agreed upon by the two communities.

Greece has consistently welcomed the United Nations initiatives for finding a just and viable solution to the Cyprus question. In this vein, we strongly support the rapid implementation of the 8 July 2006 agreement, which was reached under United Nations auspices. We shall continue to do everything possible to assist the two communities to find an agreed solution, not least because it would significantly enhance the development of friendship and cooperation between Greece and Turkey. We strongly urge Turkey to demonstrate the necessary will and flexibility towards this direction.

Our foreign policy is based on the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter. It is in this spirit that we approach our relations with neighbouring Turkey. Greece has taken specific steps and initiatives to continue broadening and strengthening our cooperation with Turkey in all fields. Lately, it has grown even further in the economic field, but also in the energy sector. We believe that a democratic Turkey with a clear European orientation, a Turkey that meets the European criteria and requirements set out in the negotiating framework with the European Union, can be a factor for stability in our part of the world. That is why we support Turkey's European aspirations. Turkey, however, must concretely demonstrate its unequivocal commitment to the principles of good neighbourly relations and peaceful settlement of disputes with all its neighbours. In any case, from the outset Greece has repeatedly stated that Turkey's full compliance should lead to full membership.

Good neighbourly relations are the cornerstone upon which the countries of South-East Europe must build a common European future of peace, stability and prosperity. The European perspective of the countries of our region has been a strategic choice for Greece. Our vision is to transform our neighbourhood into a region that is like the rest of Europe — an area of peace, democracy and prosperity. As the oldest member of the EU and NATO in the region, my country works intensively and constructively to create the necessary conditions of good neighbourliness, mutual understanding and stability in the Balkans.

Enhancing regional cooperation, establishing good neighbourly relations and finding mutually acceptable solutions to outstanding issues with neighbouring countries are fundamental prerequisites for further integration of the aspirant countries of South-East Europe into the Euro-Atlantic institutions. Provocative acts and statements with irredentist connotations are incompatible with United Nations principles and common European values. They poison the necessary climate of understanding between our peoples, and they are contrary to the European concept. In this context, Security Council resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993), calling for a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, need to be respected in practice by all.

Our efforts to secure a truly European future for the Balkans will remain inconclusive if we fail to reach a viable and sustainable settlement for Kosovo's future status. We remain convinced that this goal can be met only if, first, effective compromises between the two parties are achieved in the course of the ongoing negotiations and, secondly, if the settlement is legitimized through a Security Council resolution. In any case, this is par excellence a European problem, and the role of the European Union in this issue is essential.

I cannot think of any conflict that has held the unwavering attention of so many for so long as the one in the Middle East. We are all aware of the multifaceted challenges that we face in this part of the world. And we all agree that the nature of these challenges is such that they affect not only the peoples of the region, but the entire international community. Despite the variances that we observe among us, there is one crucial element that is common to all, and that is the need to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on a two-State solution that will guarantee security, mutual respect and a fair future for all. This is our common goal, and Greece is deeply committed to it.

The progress Africa has been making in recent years is both substantial and undeniable. It is characterized by economic growth, crisis management and a will for conflict prevention. The United Nations, deeply involved in peacekeeping and providing developmental assistance, has found in the African Union and the African regional organizations a vital partner for the success of this process. Partnership between the United Nations and the African Union, as well as the African regional organizations, could well be the key to successfully overcoming the challenges facing Africa today. In this context, we welcome the creation of the joint African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which, by combining forces of the United Nations and of the African Union, shows the way to the future for Darfur and for the continent as a whole.

International development cooperation is one of the priorities of Greek foreign policy. Our national development agency, Hellenic Aid, implements the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in the framework set out by the European Union and the principles followed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, while focusing on our cultural heritage. Our humanitarian and development projects in 46 countries aim at combating poverty, disease, malnutrition, lack of access to drinking water, and dealing with the consequences of natural disasters and conflict situations, while safeguarding the protection of human rights. We strive to address the root causes of illegal immigration, human trafficking and terrorism, since enforcement measures alone are not enough to address those problems. In 2005, Greece allocated $384.22 million to finance actions to the benefit of our partner countries in the developing world. In Africa, development assistance, ranging from humanitarian aid to HIV/AIDS care and refugee programmes, was offered to almost 20 African States.

On all the issues I have referred to, my country is committed to assisting the United Nations and to cooperating with all individual Member States in order to achieve peace and prosperity for all peoples of the world.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Anders Lidén, Chairman of the delegation of the Kingdom of Sweden.

Mr. Lidén (Sweden): Let me take this opportunity to express our strong support for the people of Burma in their struggle for a democratic future. We strongly urge the Burmese Government to initiate a peaceful dialogue, resist all violence and respect the human rights of the Burmese people, not least their freedom of expression and assembly.

There is little doubt — and this has been highlighted by all speakers during the last few days — that we, the international community, the United Nations, face major challenges in the years ahead. When addressing them, we should also be aware of the progress that has been achieved in the world in recent decades.

The accelerated globalization process has brought enormous benefits to many hundreds of millions of people, not least in the emerging economies. Today, nearly a third of the world's population live in countries where economic growth is about 10 per cent a year, and we seem to be well on our way towards meeting that important part of the Millennium Development Goals that will reduce by half the number of people living in absolute poverty around the world.

From a historical perspective, that is amazing progress. Never before in human history have so many been lifted out of absolute poverty in such a short space of time. There is no room for complacency, however. We must make globalization a force for good, for open societies, open economies and an open world for everyone on our planet. We must redouble our efforts to bring the Doha Development Round to a successful conclusion. Sustainable economic growth, a vibrant private sector and a more open international trading system are needed if we are to achieve the goals we have set for eradicating poverty in the world.

Aid for trade is a crucial complement to the opening up of markets for many countries. The developing countries of the world represent far too small a share of world trade. We must live up to the international commitments on development assistance and ensure that development cooperation becomes more efficient. That is the joint responsibility of all donors and all partner countries. The Swedish Government has initiated extensive reforms aimed at creating a new Swedish development assistance policy characterized by quality, efficiency and results in terms of reduced poverty and more democratic societies. We must now – as was highlighted last week — accelerate our efforts to address the challenge of climate change. The Swedish Government has launched a Commission on Climate Change and Development to address risk reduction, adaptation and climate-proofing development. We must make a dedicated mutual effort to meet the Millennium Development Goals. The fact that we are making substantial progress on all of them globally demonstrates that progress is indeed possible.

Human rights, security and development go hand in hand. Respect for human rights is necessary to achieve security and development, and those three elements are mutually reinforcing. Our protection of any individual anywhere is the protection of all individuals everywhere.

The death penalty must be abolished all over the world. It contravenes the very notion of human rights. Even in that area, the world is making progress, but 25 countries still sentence people to death. Six countries are responsible for more than 90 per cent of all executions worldwide. We all know who they are and expect them to take steps to abolish the death penalty.

The links between security and development, including the need to combine State-building efforts and peace-support operations for long-lasting results, place new demands on the international community. The United Nations must learn from and build on the recent experiences of a number of challenging but successful large-scale missions that integrate military and civilian components. We need to improve coordination of international efforts in the field, for instance in Afghanistan.

There are many challenges that remain to be tackled if we are to make the world a better place. Perhaps the most important is how we should best address the present threats to the existing non-proliferation regime. Were there to be one new State with nuclear weapons, the danger is that another would soon follow. Shortly, those weapons might well be out of any State's control. The risk of nuclear terrorism would be a very real one. That must be prevented. Our children deserve to live in a world safe from the threat of nuclear war and of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists. Those weapons threaten the very existence of mankind.

To prevent that, the nuclear Powers have a duty to live up to their responsibilities. To neglect is to invite failure. They need to demonstrate their readiness to substantially reduce their nuclear arsenals. Those weapons are of no use in deterring the adversaries we might face if the non-proliferation regime is eroded or collapses. It is a question of self-interest and far-sighted statesmanship.

But we must also address the urgent political issues that we are confronted with. Although the numbers of wars and conflicts have continued to decline, we should be acutely aware of the dangers of conflicts rapidly exploding, fusing together and unravelling the progress we have seen. Let me address two of those: the situation in the Middle East and the conflicts in Africa.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has to end with a peaceful settlement negotiated by the parties, resulting in the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and other neighbours. Restoring peace and economic growth in the Middle East requires parallel action by the Israelis and the Palestinians. Nothing is more important for the long-term security of Israel than the creation of a truly viable Palestinian

State. That will require freedom of movement and access to be significantly improved in the West Bank and Gaza. Prime Minister Olmert and President Abbas recognize each other as partners for peace. That provides an opening that we should all do our utmost to support.

It is therefore now time for a true peace process, and not of the incremental sort that has been tried so many times before. It is now time to achieve the peace that is the common aspiration of the vast majority of Israelis and Palestinians alike, as well as of the international community.

We urge the leaders of Israel and Palestine to move forward towards a comprehensive settlement. The international meeting this autumn is of crucial importance. But the challenges of the Middle East are not limited to that conflict.

We are convinced that we must do more to encourage reconciliation and reconstruction in Iraq after the horrible brutalities of the last few decades. We must do much more to assist and protect the more than 4 million Iraqis who have left their homes.

Iran still refuses to accept the obligations laid down by the Security Council. Iran has to convince us of the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme.

The conflicts on the Horn of Africa, stretching from Ethiopia and Eritrea to Somalia, the Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic, cause thousands upon thousands of deaths as well as untold human suffering for the survivors. National leaders on the Horn should rise to the challenge and demonstrate their commitment to peace and reconciliation. The failure of Ethiopia and Eritrea to resolve the quite straightforward demarcation of their common border, eight years after their commitment to do so, is a worrying signal, not only for these two countries, but also for the region as a whole.

In the Sudan, a process of democratization is of paramount importance to tackle the core problems and to achieve reconciliation. We must focus on support for the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement as well as the renewed peace effort for Darfur that will take place in Tripoli at the end of the month.

The situation in eastern Chad is worrying. We are impressed by the important humanitarian work carried out by local and international non-governmental organizations. It is apparent that we must do more to protect and assist refugees, internally displaced persons and other civilians affected by the conflicts of the region, as well as support the United Nations-led humanitarian efforts on both sides of the border.

How can we ever achieve true progress if women's crucial role in peacebuilding and development is not recognized? Gender equality and women's rights, participation, influence and empowerment are key goals in themselves, and are also crucial for sustainable poverty reduction.

Challenges like these show the urgent need for world leaders to accept shared responsibility for our common future. Sweden addresses these challenges in close cooperation with its European Union partners. We need a strong — and reformed — United Nations to bring us all together. A better world is within our reach.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Carsten Staur, chairman of the delegation of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Mr. Staur (Denmark): At the Millennium Summit in 2000, an unprecedented number of world leaders came together and committed themselves to an ambitious global agenda for the years ahead. This agenda was further reinforced at the 2005 World Summit, where we also adopted the far-reaching principle of responsibility to protect.

By the very nature of the commitments from the Millennium Declaration and the World Summit, it was globally recognized that there can be no development without security and human rights — and vice versa. We owe it to ourselves and to the world community to take stock of our progress. How well, then, have we met this challenge so far?

At the institutional level, there can be no question that important progress has been achieved, as witnessed by the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. But institution-building alone will not do. We need to show the necessary resolve to make these new institutions effective instruments in the service of the global community. We have achieved little if we do not endeavour to ensure that they fulfil their stated purposes and that they realize their true potential. Our

challenge now is to address the substantive issues and to do so in earnest.

As we cross the halfway mark towards 2015, substantial progress has been made at the global level towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The results achieved through market-oriented economic reform in Asia and Latin America over the past decade prove that eradication of poverty is not an elusive, unattainable goal.

But, again, there is no room for complacency. A substantial increase in efforts is still needed, especially if sub-Saharan Africa is to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The facts are quite simple. If progress in Africa is not accelerated, we will not live up to our responsibility. Denmark believes that the time has come to arrange a United Nations summit focusing on the progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and on financing for development.

Africa remains at the heart of Danish development assistance. The Danish Government firmly believes that development assistance to Africa should increase. We need to live up to the promise to double aid for Africa by 2010. Denmark is keeping its part of the bargain. We are committed to providing 0.8 per cent of our national income in development assistance. Two thirds of our bilateral assistance will go to the African continent.

But clearly, development assistance alone is not enough. Trade and good governance is key to development. There is no substitute for national ownership and for national commitment to good governance or for transparent and liberal trade and investment regimes that allow developing countries to benefit from globalization.

It is a key goal for the Danish Government to promote good governance, democracy and human rights with no impunity for crimes against humanity and we will do this through an active foreign policy. Denmark will seriously do its best to contribute to a more effective United Nations and to assist countries that have a strong commitment to development but lack the necessary resources.

Climate change has undoubtedly become one of the most urgent global challenges of our times, one that, by its very definition, must be dealt with on a truly global level. Climate change will affect the poorest and the weakest the most. And countries will have a very different capacity to act. Therefore, we have to base our joint efforts on the notion of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Denmark is pleased to host the fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Climate Change, to be held in December 2009. We have already commenced the preparations for the conference. Our ambitions are high. We must reach consensus on an effective and multilateral post-Kyoto agreement. The Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen is the last call if the agreement is to enter into force by 2012.

We commend the Secretary-General for his leadership on this issue. In our view, an inclusive United Nations-based multilateral approach is crucial if we are to bring all parties together in responding to the global climate challenge.

The High-level Event on Climate Change held here in New York last week was an illustration of this commitment. I want to echo two essential points made at the High-level Event that were also taken up by the Secretary-General in his conclusions. First, I would note that the Conference of the Parties to take place in Bali next December represents a crucial cut-off date. If we are serious about fighting climate change, the thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Climate Change in Bali must define a clear timetable for negotiations towards a comprehensive post-2012 framework. Secondly, I would note that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) remains the only legitimate framework for truly global negotiations on climate change. It is within the UNFCCC that an ambitious agreement must be reached to reduce global emissions and to counter climate change.

Another major global challenge to which Denmark attaches great importance is to obtain equal opportunities for women. Here, we also see a crucial role for an effective United Nations where gender equality is dealt with in a strengthened and systematic way, especially at the country level. In our view, no one should be excluded from contributing to peace, freedom and development. It is, therefore, of paramount importance — as a judicial, moral and ethical responsibility — that women everywhere have the same opportunities as men. In the fight against poverty, it is an absolute necessity. Women must have equal rights as well as full access to employment, land and financial resources. Only then can development

assistance realize its true potential and poverty be alleviated.

Donors must actively support partner countries in achieving gender equality. In the coming years, Denmark will have a strong focus on women and their role in development and conflict resolution — setting goals, earmarking funds and monitoring progress to ensure that policies create results.

Making a difference in that respect will require leadership from all parties. Without addressing the role of women, we will never manage to halve extreme poverty by 2015. And our efforts to support the rights and empowerment of women must be complemented by a targeted effort to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights.

As we stand here today, we face more global challenges than ever before. The world faces many unresolved conflicts, not least in Africa. We need to stay focused and to enhance the Organization's capacity in conflict prevention, conflict management and peacebuilding.

A strong United Nations is required to cope with the global challenges of today and tomorrow. Only a strong and effective United Nations can show the necessary political leadership with regard to development, humanitarian crisis and conflicts.

In the Sudan, we have an obligation to help the people of Darfur achieve peace through the restoration of stability. The killings, violence and atrocities must end. This has taken far too long. There is now finally some progress in the attempts to find a solution to the conflict in Darfur, and we have a responsibility to ensure that it is implemented. Denmark actively supports the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur as well as the resumed political process. It raises real hope for improvement in the deplorable situation on the ground and in the prospects for a long-term political solution. As part of this process, we must implement the arrest warrants of the International Criminal Court and bring perpetrators of crime to justice.

Afghanistan must be one of the top priorities of the international community and of the United Nations. It is important to maintain broad consensus among all international partners regarding the need to carry through what we have started. To that end, we need the United Nations to play a stronger role in Afghanistan. A coordinated engagement — civilian as well as military — is a precondition for success. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) must use its full potential to coordinate the international efforts and as a counterpart to the Afghans. And UNAMA should be present in each and every province, including in the south.

In Kosovo, only a solution to the final-status issue will ensure stability and prosperity in the region. We share the opinion of the Secretary-General that the status quo is not sustainable. We hope for results in the new negotiations. As stated by the presidency of the European Union (EU), the EU will live up to its particular responsibility and participate actively in the collective effort to bring the parties closer together. The goal is to obtain a comprehensive political solution that will lead to a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo.

We also believe that the United Nations continues to be an international focal point for our common efforts in the fight against terrorism. Last year's adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy was of crucial importance. It underlined the firm commitment of the international community to stand united against those who wish to threaten international peace and security. The next step should be to finalize the negotiations on a draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism. That would send another strong political signal of our unity. Adoption of the convention would be a worthy achievement of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

Finally, let me say a few words on United Nations reform and the institutional challenge for the Organization. The starting point is clear: to ensure the necessary reforms of the United Nations, there is no substitute for strong political will on the part of individual Member States.

Reforms of United Nations operational activities are taking shape. However, much work remains to be done if the recommendations of the High-level Panel are to be followed and if the United Nations is truly to deliver as one. It is of paramount importance to make the United Nations more focused and effective at the country level. Experiences from the pilot countries are encouraging and should inspire further action.

The Organization's governance structures also require further reform. The General Assembly should keep its focus on decision-making regarding important

matters and leave detailed management to managers. The Security Council would benefit from reform that makes it more representative. Denmark is therefore encouraged by the new momentum in discussions on Security Council reform.

But, first and foremost, strengthening the United Nations requires an understanding that the United Nations cannot do everything for everyone at the same time. We need to agree on a common vision and on priorities for the Organization. We need to take a step back from the day-to-day agenda and focus on the role that a strong United Nations could play in the future — which points towards strengthening the United Nations in relation to three of its unique features.

The first feature is conflict resolution and prevention as undertaken by the Security Council, the General Assembly and the good offices of the Secretary-General, as well as through United Nations peacekeeping efforts.

The second feature is strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations system to assist countries in the early phases of recovery following conflicts, or countries with very weak institutions. Here, the United Nations has a key role to play. We should help to build stronger bridges from peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance to peacebuilding, reconstruction and development. We should help to build up States and to ensure that weak States do not fall back into conflict or chaos. The Peacebuilding Commission will be essential in this regard.

Thirdly and finally, in the area of international norm-setting, where the United Nations has already shaped the international agenda for action, one of the goals should be to enhance the role played by the Organization in ensuring respect for human rights. As Members of the United Nations, we have taken on the shared responsibility of protecting those in the most vulnerable situations, not least children.

What is needed now is to follow through and to catalyse action. That is no small task, even for a strong United Nations.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Robert Hill, chairman of the delegation of Australia.

Mr. Hill (Australia): I join my colleagues in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I would also like to wish His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon well for this, his first full session of the General Assembly as Secretary-General.

On behalf of the Australian Government, let me begin by reaffirming Australia's long-standing call for reform of the United Nations. Australia strongly supports efforts to make the Organization more effective. And Australia would like to acknowledge Secretary-General Ban's push for reform so far.

But reform of the United Nations is not an end in itself. We must reform the United Nations so that it can act decisively to meet global challenges. Simply talking about issues does not solve problems.

Over the past 60 years, when the United Nations has acted it has proved its worth. United Nations peacekeeping operations around the world have saved lives and helped communities rebuild. Australia has a proud history of supporting them. Australia was the first country on the ground in what was arguably the first-ever United Nations peacekeeping operation, the 1947 Consular Commission to Indonesia. In the past 60 years, Australia has made contributions to 39 United Nations peacekeeping operations, and we continue that tradition today.

The United Nations, as the only Organization with a truly global membership, has both a unique opportunity to meet challenges and a responsibility to take action. By coming together, we can achieve more than each of our countries could on its own. The United Nations has great moral authority. But, if it fails to act decisively, that authority will be squandered.

As Members of the United Nations, we have set ourselves important goals over the past 62 years: maintaining global peace and security, supporting economic and social development and advancing human rights. In 2005, we pledged to protect those people who are most vulnerable: those facing genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. We recognized the responsibility to protect as a central tenet of our shared humanity.

This responsibility to protect underpins the notion that States must protect their own populations. But, if they should fail to do so, the international community has a responsibility to act, not to stand idly by in the face of atrocities, genocide or ethnic cleansing. For the international community, that means we must commit to prevent — and respond to — these most serious of

crimes, wherever they occur. After the immediate crisis has passed, we must support recovery efforts to help communities rebuild and reconcile, by addressing the causes of the crisis.

Last year, the Security Council drew upon the responsibility to protect for the first time in a country-specific resolution: resolution 1706 (2006), on Darfur. And, under a subsequent resolution, an African Union-United Nations hybrid peacekeeping operation was established, with a robust mandate to protect civilians and humanitarian workers. The international community must now ensure that the deployment of the Hybrid force proceeds quickly. Active cooperation is needed across the international community if we are to keep our promise to the people of Darfur. The alternative — to fail — is unthinkable. This is a test for the United Nations and its Member States.

But resolving the tragedy in Darfur is, first and foremost, a test for the Government of Sudan and other parties to the conflict. Ongoing military operations by the Government of Sudan, and last weekend's killing and abduction of African Union peacekeepers by rebel forces, demonstrate the urgent need for the parties to stop these crimes and build peace. Those who have committed crimes in Darfur must be punished.

Australia calls on the Government of Sudan to act on the warrants issued by the International Criminal Court. We call on Sudan to arrest those accused and to hand them over to the Court.

Darfur is not the only humanitarian crisis we have experienced or will face in the United Nations. Tragically, other populations will also require protection from crimes against humanity. The responsibility to protect provides the necessary guide to action. But it is up to Security Council members, on behalf of the international community, to act, and for all United Nations members to then support them.

The events of the past week in Burma remind us of the irrepressible human impulse to seek democratic freedoms and human rights. The United Nations and individual countries must let the courageous protestors in Burma know that their message is understood — a message on the need to move towards genuine democratic progress and national reconciliation, and away from military domination.

Australia has joined the international community in condemning the violent suppression of peaceful demonstrations by monks and civilians. We call for the immediate release of those arrested for exercising their fundamental human rights to peaceful protest and for humane treatment of all those detained. Australia is also introducing targeted financial measures against members of the Burmese regime and its supporters to increase pressure on them to engage in genuine political reform and national reconciliation.

Australia supports the consistent efforts that the United Nations has made to monitor and improve the situation in Burma. We welcomed the statement by the United Nations Security Council following its special consultations on 26 September. We welcome the current visit to Burma by the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, and his access to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. We urge the Burmese authorities to work constructively and meaningfully with him in support of his United Nations-mandated mission. Mr. Gambari is well placed to assist in achieving a peaceful resolution to the current crisis.

The responsibility to protect means that we, the international community, must act when confronted with the most serious of crimes. But we also have to act to confront a range of global challenges, from terrorism and climate change to poverty. Terrorists stand in stark contrast to those of us who seek to protect the vulnerable. Their goals are global and their reach transnational. No single country can solve the problem alone. There have been some successes in combating terrorist networks, but we need to develop even more effective strategies to disrupt and dismantle their networks.

Australia calls on Member States of the United Nations to implement fully all relevant Security Council resolutions on freezing the assets of terrorists. Terrorist organizations must be starved of their funds and support. Australia also calls on Member States to conclude a comprehensive convention against terrorism as soon as possible. A convention would provide a solid foundation for international cooperation to prevent, prosecute and punish terrorist acts.

The international community must support the efforts of States that fight terrorism — in particular, fledgling democratic States. We must help those States to establish strong democratic institutions and

accountable Government structures, as State weakness can only allow terrorism to fester.

We should cooperate also to prevent man-portable air-defence systems from falling into the hands of terrorist groups. We should also intensify work on the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. Australia urges Member States to join the Initiative.

We must also act to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Australia welcomes the robust action taken by the Security Council over the past year in imposing sanctions against programmes relating to proliferation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and also in Iran. The Security Council's action on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear issue sent a strong signal to that country that the international community would not tolerate its nuclear programmes. We welcome recent progress in the Six-Party Talks. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to maintain the momentum and implement fully its commitment to denuclearize.

The Security Council also sent a strong message to Iran. We welcome Iran's stated intention to work with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to address long-outstanding issues. But the international community, including Australia, remains deeply concerned about Iran's nuclear programme. Iran should suspend its uranium enrichment programme, as required by the Security Council, and cooperate fully with the IAEA.

Australia also hopes that the United Nations can continue its work in protecting populations by raising barriers against the illicit trade in conventional weapons. We support the development of an arms trade treaty.

Climate change is another challenge that clearly requires our urgent attention. Climate change demands an effective and enduring global response. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the forum to forge such a global response. On 9 September, the leaders of the 21-member Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) economies issued the historic Sydney Declaration on Climate Change, Energy Security and Clean Development. The APEC leaders agreed to work to achieve a common understanding on long-term aspirational goals to reduce emissions and pave the way for an effective post-2012 international arrangement.

Significantly, the APEC leaders, whose economies represent over half of the world's gross domestic product (GDP), agreed that the post-2012 agreement needs to be comprehensive and that all economies should contribute to meeting shared global goals. They also agreed that our responses must be equitable and environmentally and economically effective, as well as capable of including diverse approaches.

The High-Level Event on Climate Change, hosted by the Secretary-General on 24 September, and the Major Economies Meeting on Energy, Security and Climate Change, hosted by United States Secretary Rice a few days later, highlighted these same goals and built additional international momentum for a post-2012 agreement. Australia calls on parties to this year's United Nations conference on climate change in Bali to agree to a new mandate for the Convention that will move beyond Kyoto and forge a comprehensive new agreement.

The international community must also address pressing health and human security issues, in particular the spread of HIV/AIDS. Failure to combat HIV/AIDS will have global economic and social consequences. Australia takes its responsibility to act seriously and continues to support its near neighbours in the Asia Pacific region to address the challenge of HIV/AIDS.

The Australian Government believes that the challenge of ending endemic poverty remains the single most difficult economic and social issue, and yet the most fundamental one. In a world where international commerce moves at the click of a button, people should not be starving. Commerce and economic development have the power to lift people out of poverty. Free and open trade helps countries to develop through integration into the world trading system. We must conclude the Doha Round and deliver results that increase market access and reduce domestic subsidies.

Development assistance, too, plays a key role in alleviating poverty. At the United Nations Summit in 2005, Australia undertook to double its development assistance budget by the year 2010, and we are well on the way to achieving that goal, but this aid must be focused and delivered in a way that promotes broad-based economic growth and encourages good governance. We need to make long-term commitments,

particularly in post-conflict development and reconstruction.

I have outlined today serious global challenges facing the international community — humanitarian and political crises, including in Darfur and Burma, climate change, poverty, weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. The Security Council has drawn upon the responsibility to protect principle, endorsed by leaders at the 2005 Summit. It is clear that the international community as a whole has a responsibility to protect those facing genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Our task is to respond quickly and effectively. The United Nations has been vested with great authority by its Members to effect real change. But that authority will mean little unless we turn commitment into action.

The President: Several representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply in response to the statement made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea this morning. The statement by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea concerning Japan is entirely groundless and we cannot accept it. First, the claim by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that Japan is turning its self-defence force into a regular army, with a mandate of pre-emptive strikes on other countries, by changing the peace constitution into a war constitution is totally false.

In accordance with its constitution, for the 60 years since the end of the Second World War Japan has adhered consistently and exclusively to a defensive security policy based on the principle that it should never become a military Power. Japan does not possess nuclear weapons, nor does it export weapons of any kind and it has been actively involved in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. I wish to draw the attention of all Member States to the fact that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea conducted a nuclear test on 9 October 2006. That test was in addition to the ballistic missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in July 2006.

That act — which was a grave threat to the peace and security not only of Japan but also of East Asia and the international community — is totally unacceptable. We also have to recall that on 14 October 2006, the Security Council adopted unanimously resolution 1718 (2006) sending out a resolute message from the international community condemning the act and indicating measures to be taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the other Member States of the United Nations.

With regard to the measures against the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, as mentioned by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea this morning, the measures being taken by the Government of Japan are in accordance with its national laws and do not violate international law in any way. The allegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is therefore totally groundless.

Let me explain in detail. On 25 April 2007, the Japanese police conducted a search on a subsidiary organization of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, located in the Korean Press Hall, in order to collect evidence related to the suspected abduction case. Before the search was conducted, the Japanese police obtained a search warrant from the appropriate court. The Japanese police searched the building legally and properly. They took no illegal action of any kind and engaged in no violence or threats. As for the measures with respect to the headquarters of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan and the land it occupies, they were necessary in order to collect a debt that the General Association owed. They were taken by a Japanese public organization called the Resolution and Collection Corporation (RCC) to collect a debt owed by the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan. The RCC's collection activities with regard to the non-performing loans of the bankrupt Democratic People's Republic of Korea-affiliated credit institutions, or credit unions, did not differ in any way from measures taken with respect to other bankrupt financial institutions in Japan. The measures were taken purely for the purpose of collecting debt and not for any political or diplomatic purpose.

The Government of Japan has long been taking measures to ensure that Korean residents in Japan lead normal lives, including granting them the appropriate legal status to remain in Japan and improving conditions that affect how they live. The constitution of Japan guarantees equality before the law without discrimination of any kind. On the basis of that principle, Japan has striven to achieve a society free from all forms of discrimination.

Finally, the fundamental policy of Japan with regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is based on the Pyongyang Declaration of 17 September 2002 and remains unchanged. Japan will continue to make every effort to normalize relations through the settlement of differences relating to the unfortunate past and the comprehensive resolution of outstanding problems such as those relating to nuclear issues, the abductions and missile issues.

Japan would like to consult with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on concrete steps that might be taken for normalization based on the outcome of the recent meeting of the working group on the normalization of relations between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Hill (Australia): I am exercising a right of reply in relation to assertions by Mr. Oti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Solomon Islands, in his statement to the General Assembly last evening (see A/62/PV.13), that the Australia-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) has occupied Solomon Islands and is in contravention of the United Nations Charter.

Those assertions are completely unfounded. RAMSI is a Pacific Islands Forum-endorsed mission. It was deployed at the request of the Solomon Islands Government in response to a seriously deteriorating law-and-order situation in the Solomon Islands. RAMSI was also supported by the United Nations Security Council and the Commonwealth. RAMSI's presence and work in Solomon Islands is underpinned by an international treaty between Solomon Islands, Australia and all the other members of the Pacific Islands Forum which are active participants in RAMSI. Facilitating legislation was unanimously passed by the Solomon Islands Parliament.

As the country entrusted under the RAMSI treaty with lead responsibility for RAMSI, Australia remains vigilant of the importance of respecting the sovereignty of Solomon Islands. RAMSI clearly does not seek to substitute for the Solomon Islands Government. Rather, RAMSI has created an enabling environment so that the Solomon Islands Government can once again deliver essential services to its people. All RAMSI programmes are agreed with the Solomon Islands Government. RAMSI has worked in partnership with the Solomon Islands Government to rebuild the institutions of State to enable them to enforce the country's own laws and regulations. In doing so, RAMSI has assisted Solomon Islands to reassert its sovereignty.

There are a variety of mechanisms in place that ensure RAMSI's accountability to the Solomon Islands Government and contributing countries, including a treaty obligation for the Australian and Solomon Islands Prime Ministers to jointly report to Pacific Island Forum leaders meetings on RAMSI each year, monthly reports to the members of the Pacific Island Forum, annual reporting by RAMSI on its performance, a medium-term strategy that maps out an agreed path by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI towards the completion of RAMSI's mandate and a wide-ranging review of RAMSI by the Pacific Island Forum at the specific request of the Solomon Islands Government.

RAMSI has now been in the Solomon Islands for four years and in that short time has made remarkable progress that has seen fundamental improvements to people's daily lives. Law and order was quickly restored, enabling people to lead normal lives, free of fear and intimidation. Revenue has grown in the order of over 500 per cent. Foreign investors are returning. The Solomon Islands Government is producing balanced budgets, and government services, such as schools and health clinics, have been restored.

Given these significant achievements, it is not surprising that RAMSI continues to enjoy widespread community support in the Solomon Islands. A recent survey demonstrated that over 90 per cent of Solomon Islanders continue to support the presence of RAMSI in their country.

Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal): My delegation would like to exercise the right of reply in response to the remarks made by the leader of the Bhutanese delegation this afternoon on the issue of Bhutanese refugees sheltered in Nepal on humanitarian grounds for the past 16 years.

The presence of Bhutanese refugees in camps in Nepal and their plight has roots in the discriminatory policy of that Government towards its citizens. His remarks are misplaced and, therefore, unfounded. They ignore the suffering of the refugees in camps.

Nepal considers this problem as one between the refugees and the Government of Bhutan. Our position is that these refugees must be allowed to return to their homeland in full dignity and honour, without any conditions, and they must be allowed to be a part of their national life.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate the position that the leader of my delegation took yesterday.

Mr. Pak Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I would like to exercise the right of reply to the statement or comment by the delegation of Japan.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea cannot remain unconcerned at the recent moves by Japan to militarize by turning various forces into a regular army. We are concerned about these Japanese moves, particularly because Japan is close to our country and it invaded the Asian countries and committed the massacre of millions of innocent people. Japan has furthermore been distorting its aggressive history instead of repudiating it.

Japan's non-admission of its crimes against humanity is little short of an open declaration that it would again launch military aggression overseas.

It is against this background that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea built a strong defensive deterrent in order to ensure that Japan would not dare to launch aggression against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea anymore. My delegation would like to remind the Japanese delegate that renouncing its militaristic past is best for Japan itself and that the international community will not allow Japan to play a political and military role equivalent to its economic power.

As for the second issue that the delegate of Japan mentioned, we are very much concerned about the suppression of Koreans and their organizations in Japan by Japanese authorities. This has become an intolerable situation. From the outset of this year, Japanese authorities set in motion vicious media attacks with various kinds of false reports aimed at tarnishing the image of Korean organizations in Japan in a frantic bid to incite bitterness towards my country, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and Korean organizations in Japan.

At the same time, the director of the Japanese National Police Agency has organized a wholesale repressive campaign by his policemen to prosecute and arrest officials of *Chongryon*, Korean organizations and Koreans in Japan, and to carry out other actions, although the police have an obligation to protect the rights and activities of all citizens. They claim that it is the task of the police to put pressure on North Korea and to force North Korea to enter into negotiations with Japan.

The Japanese police authorities have conducted a forced search of numerous Korean organizations and related facilities, including the headquarters of the *Chongryon* and Korean schools, blundering and arresting Koreans with the support of heavily armed police units and armed vehicles.

The Japanese authorities went even further to force Chongryon to sell land and buildings and its entire headquarters in a vicious attempt to exterminate that Korean organization at any cost.

This move seeks to physically annihilate the centre of the activities of Korean organizations that defends the democratic national rights of Koreans in Japan and to stamp out the activities of the Korean organizations and the Koreans in Japan. That Korean organization, called *Chongryon*, is alleged to be an overseas compatriots organization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Its mission is to protect the democratic national rights of the direct victims of the drafting of Koreans by Japan in the past and the Koreans in Japan and their descendants.

The Japanese authorities describe their criminal action taken against Koreans and their organizations as carrying out the law or simply a financial issue relating to the collection of bonds. However, this is a political plot and represents criminal moves to deprive Chongryon, the Korean organization, of the centre of its activities and destroy it at any cost. But they deny this clear fact.

I would also like to reply to the statement made by the representative of Australia a few minutes ago. The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, as made clear time and again, including from this very podium, is no more than a product of deep-rooted, hostile

policies towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. No issue will be solved by resorting to sanctions and pressure and hostile policies, as proven by history.

Our national military power is defensive and its nature rests solely on the need to safeguard our sovereignty. It also serves the interests of the countries in the region to promote peace, security and stability.

We urge Australia to look squarely at the nature and origin of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula and to act in a way that is conducive to the solution of this issue.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): It was not our intention to take the floor again, but we feel that we are obliged to reply to the statement that was just made by the delegate of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Japan has been facing up to its past with sincerity and consistency. We feel remorse and have offered apologies so many times since the end of the Second World War. With that in mind, since that time Japan has been consistently dedicating itself to promoting international peace and prosperity as well as demonstrating its respect for democracy and human rights. That is a very well-known fact to all the Members of the United Nations.

So what was said by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is not acceptable. As I have already stated in my previous statement, the Japanese policy towards defence and towards security in our region is solely of a defensive nature. We have already clearly stated that Japan's policy is confined only to defending my country and that we have no policy whatsoever of exporting arms to foreign countries. We do not possess any nuclear weapons — which is different from some of the neighbouring countries — and we have no policies that pose a threat to foreign countries. None of that is the case.

Regarding the allegation that has been made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with regard to the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, I stated in my previous statement that nothing here could be regarded as a violation of international law, and nothing should be regarded as imposing measures hindering the residency of Koreans living in Japan. We are totally against that kind of thing.

I do not have to repeat once again because we have already described the police action taken by the Japanese police authorities vis-à-vis the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan and also the measures taken by the Resolution and Collection Corporation (RCC), which is a public organization, against the General Association of Korean Residents. This was an issue of debt on the part of that organization. And the first one was closely related to the abduction case — and that is very serious. That is a serious crime in Japan.

Thus, the allegation that has been made by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is quite unacceptable. We would like to repeat that the policy that has been applied and other facts clearly show that there is no weight to this allegation.

Mr. Pak Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I am very sorry to take the floor again. I will be very brief concerning the remarks made by the Japanese representative. Japan always says that it apologizes for the crimes committed in the past, in particular against Koreans. But this is only lip-service. We very often see that they revoke their apologies. Their apologies should be followed by action.

For example, numerous high-level officials of the Japanese Government and of the parliament, even say that there were no comfort women for the Japanese army. They distort the facts. They even humiliate those comfort women as prostitutes. They call it the "war against Asian countries", "the war for liberation". We do not see any sincere apology on the part of Japan.

On the second issue, that of the Association of Korean Residents in Japan, he said there was no violation. He said that this was an issue of debt. If this issue is an issue of debt, as the Japanese representative said, then why did Japan mobilize a huge force of armed forces — hundreds of policemen, and police forces with armed vehicles — to suppress those who opposed the search by Japanese policemen?

And as for the abduction issue, I have already made our position clear on 28 September, in my reply to Japan (see A/62/PV.11). In a nutshell, we officially regret that the 13 Japanese were abducted, and we sent all those who remained alive to Japan, together with their children. I wonder if the Japanese representative

has ever thought about the crimes Japan committed against Koreans: 8.4 million were forcibly drafted and abducted. But they have never, in this international forum, apologized for — or admitted — that.

We urge Japan to undertake a policy of closer cooperation, clearly look at the situation now and act with prudence.

The meeting rose at 8 p.m.